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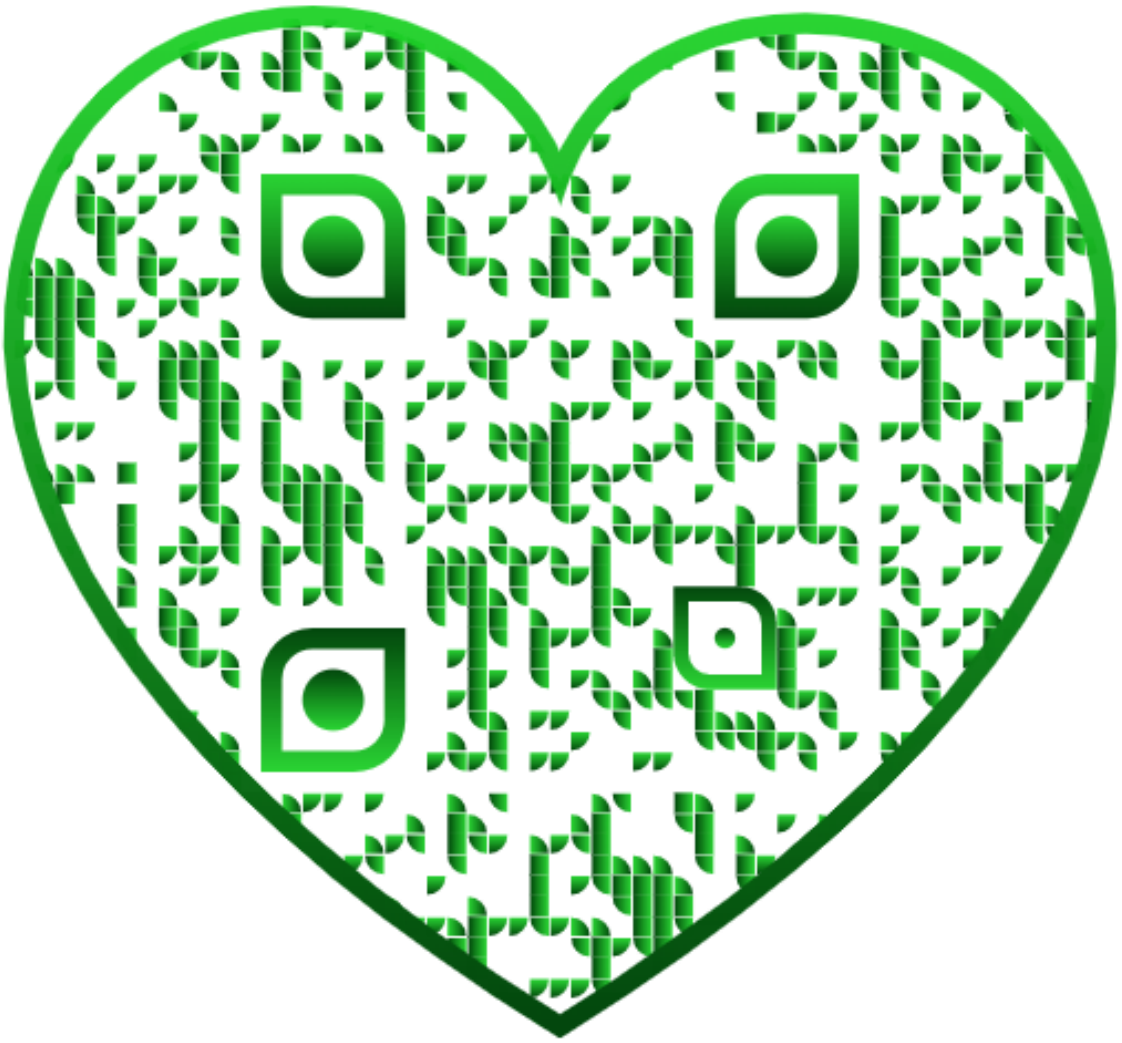

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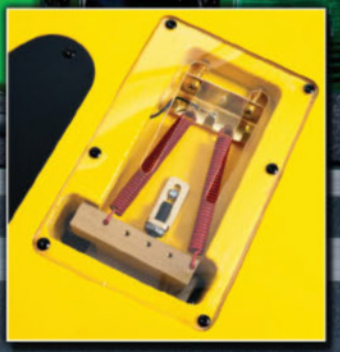

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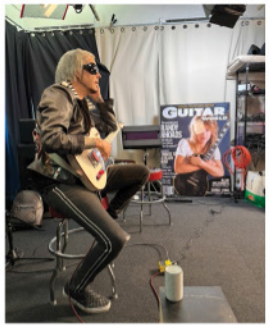
VOL. 45 | NO. 6 | JUNE 2024

LET'S GO TO THE VIDEOTAPE!

I'M NOT SURE if anyone (besides me, of course) gets the very old Warner Wolf reference in my headline, but...

I've been spending a lot more time at *GW*'s video studio in Manhattan lately — and so have a few other people, including John 5, Marcus King and Kerry King (It's a shame we can't complete "the unrelated King collection" with visits from the late B.B., Albert and Freddie, but hey, we do the best we can). We've been ramping up our video output, which took a major hit during Covid and never fully recovered; but things are looking up (and our spiffy new cameras are making things look better than ever), and you can see the results over on our YouTube channel. Be sure to check out our two latest John 5 playthroughs — "Strung Out" and his cover of Les Paul & Mary Ford's "How High the Moon," an unusual Zoom interview with Marty Friedman that grew out of a two-page Tune-Up in our March 2024 issue, and the one where Marcus King lists his five favorite Marcus King riffs!



CORRECTIONS:

>>> In the Eddie Kramer interview that appeared in our April 2024 issue, the reporter transcribed one of Kramer's replies as follows: "I recall seeing Jimmy Page come in and doing an overdub on that song [*referring to "You Really Got Me"*]. What Kramer actually said was, "I think on that song, 'You Really Got Me' — either 'You Really Got Me' or one of the others — I remember seeing Jimmy Page come in and doing an overdub."

>>> In a Tune-Up about Duane Betts that appeared in our October 2023 issue, we implied that former Allman Brothers Band guitarist Dickey Betts had passed away. Although we immediately corrected the online version of the story, the print correction has regretably slipped through the cracks until now.

— Damian Fanelli

CYNTHIA MOORHEAD (DF) CLAUDIA SCHMIDT/SKETCHY PEDALS (PEDAL)

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JEN ROSENSTEIN

SOUNDING BOARD

Got something you want to say? **EMAIL US AT: GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**

JESSE WILD/FUTURE (ABOVE) ROSS MARINO/GETTY IMAGES (EVH)

Should new guitarists start out with an open tuning?

[*Editor's note: The first six Sounding Board entries below are in response to a question I posed in my April 2024 Woodshed column: Is it OK for new guitarists to start with an open tuning, just so they can hit the ground running and play something "musical" right out of the gate — or should everyone start with one of the more traditional routes? And yes, I'm paraphrasing a bit... —DF*]

I just read your Woodshed piece in *GW* Vol. 45, No. 4. I started playing many years ago on a baritone ukulele, learning basic chords from a Mel Bay book.

When my hands were big enough to play a six-string acoustic guitar, my older sister showed me more chords and some cool songs by Neil Young and the Yardbirds. I'm 64 now (like the Beatles song! Yikes!) and play those basic chords to this day. My guess is most kids and people setting out to play guitar want to play songs by the musicians and bands they like. I learned eventually that many of those songs are played in alternate tunings, but I think it's better to struggle and learn playing in standard tunings before branching out into open G, drop D, etc. Even though Eddie played in drop D, drop whatever, plus a few more half steps (I am clueless), you can still noodle around with his songs in standard tuning. It's fun, which is the main reason we play! Trust me, you're not a "fuddy-duddy" — or you wouldn't be the editor-in-chief of *GW*.

— Jon Feaver, Iowa City, IA

Great question! I've been starting my grandson very gradually with guitar. He is 11. I started him off on double drop D because he can bar chords across the top three strings and lower three and make a chord. I've been wondering if I'm doing the right thing. Thanks for asking the same question.

— Barry Lee Seip

Your initial response was the correct one. If they start off easy, they won't put in the work after the fact... Or (and I've seen this) they will just play their entire career in that open tuning, which would only work for a solo artist playing originals.

— Dave Aaron

A person must have an intense desire to learn guitar, and guitar tunings don't matter. The first year is the hardest, and the student must soldier through aching fingers. There is no easy way. As for young people (I'm an old fuddy-duddy), they need proper inspiration, and it doesn't help when guitar magazines put old guys on many of their covers.

— Terry Kempler, White Marsh, MD

I agree with you 100 percent. I've been playing and growing with playing rock guitar since age 14 (now 64), and only in the last few years have I started exploring open tunings. Inspired by Mike Dawes, Devin Townsend and several others, it immediately opened up (pun intended) creativity and new avenues of play. I also rediscovered older material from Foghat and Joe Walsh (open E), the Rolling Stones, Bad Company, CSNY and countless others — finally realizing why it never quite sounded right when I faked it with standard tuning.

Not so short, but new players should absolutely be exposed to alternate tunings; it may not be for everyone, but it might unleash the next Dawes or Devy to the guitar world!

— James "Chris" Swartz, Port Townsend, WA

I just received my April 2024 *GW* and was moved by your editorial. My short answer is, guitarists should be learning anything they are hooked to! However, may I humbly suggest you check Gordie Johnson's YouTube channel? Gordie is a Canadian guitarist who uses a lot of open G tuning to play... blues, of course! But he also uses it on reggae and rock. And you know what? He plays with banjo finger picks on double-neck guitars! And he sings at the same time. He was involved in Big Sugar, Grady and a lot of other projects you may find interesting.

When I was young, I wanted to play a double-neck and play Led Zeppelin. So I bought one. When I saw what Gordie played on a double-neck, I just sold mine. The guy is incredible, and I wish I would have learned about him when I started to learn guitar. I have the feeling I'd still have my double-neck today.

It would be great to have some Big Sugar tabs... and more Clutch too! Thanks for all the good work.

— Joël G

Great to see NJ's Frank Infante in *GW*

I liked the article on Frank Infante, a fellow New Jersey guitarist. I was happy he made great music with Blondie, and now I know which guitar parts he played. I think most of us got the wrong info on who played what. I hope Frank puts out something.

— Linda Mancuso

Eddie in action in 1986

Transcribe Eddie — without a net!

Being that it's Eddie's birthday (January 26, 2024) and the launch day for Wolf's new EVH SA-126 guitar, it would be cool if you could [*transcribe*] Ed's solo from Van Halen's *Live Without a Net*. This has to be the best I've seen him live on video, and I think everyone would love it. It's been a lifelong passion to see it transcribed on sheet/tab music for years now. I wish Hal Leonard would or could bring this cool video out on sheet music like they did years ago with 1993's *Live: Right Here, Right Now*. To most Van Halen fans, this was Ed at the top of his game.

— Dave Loveless

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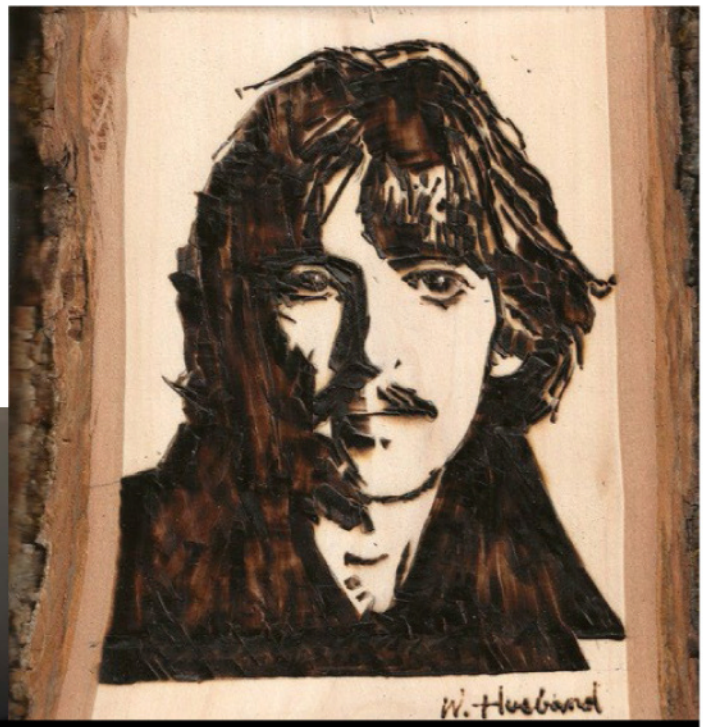
READER ART
OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com** with a .jpg or screenshot of the image. And (um, obviously...), please remember to include your name!

SRV NUMBER ONE BY MARK MARTIN



GEORGE HARRISON BY WAYNE HUSBAND

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

Jason Allwood

AGE: 46
HOMETOWN: Columbus, OH
GUITARS: Teles, Strats, Gibson L-00, Gibson Les Paul Junior, baritone Telecaster
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Originals off the new Central Blues Co. album
GEAR I WANT MOST: Gibson SG Junior

Deus X

AGE: 60
HOMETOWN: Lincoln Park, MI
GUITARS: Les Paul Custom, Epiphone Les Paul Custom, Michael Kelly Custom Patriot guitars
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Music by my band, StrengthBeyondYou — and a lot of session work
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fractal Audio Systems FM9

Ric Welch

AGE: 67
TOWN: Chanhassen, MN
GUITARS: PRS Custom 24, PRS Santana SE, '86 Fender Strat
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Jimi Hendrix "Little Wing," Stevie Ray Vaughan "Texas Flood," ZZ Top "Waiting for the Bus"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Lifetime supply of D'Addario strings

(Photo: HeadshotsWOW)

Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**. And pray!

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Ihsahn, photographed in Notodden, Norway, January 22, 2020

PHOTO BY KEVIN NIXON

Gear of the Dark

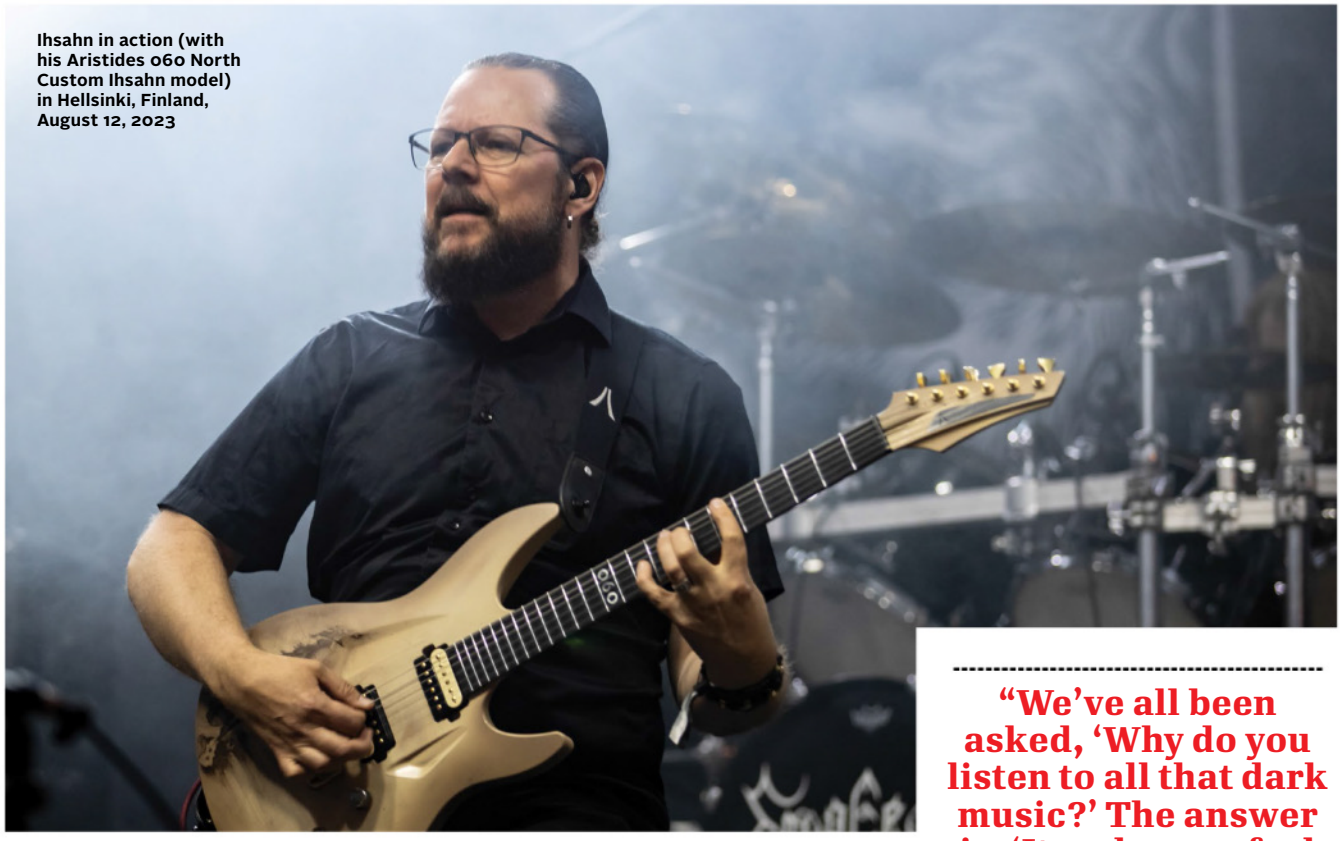
IHSAHN, THE EMPEROR MASTERMIND WHO TOOK HEAVY MUSIC TO NEW HEIGHTS, ON THE MERITS OF TECHNOLOGY AND HOW EXTREME METAL STRUMMING HAS A LOT IN COMMON WITH ACOUSTIC PLAYING

By Amit Sharma

MANY OF US will remember getting our first delay pedal, treasuring those fond memories of how one clever little box can make an unaccompanied guitar sound thicker, deeper and, on certain settings, almost orchestral. For Norwegian musician Vegard Sverre Tveitan, better known around the world as Ihsahn — the man who pioneered symphonic black metal in Emperor before pursuing more atmospheric endeavors as a solo artist — the first echoes he employed were right outside his front door.

"I grew up on a farm with a lake in front and mountains on the other side," he says, looking back on his earliest memories as a musician. "I didn't have a delay pedal as a 10-year-old, so I would take my amp onto the veranda, and the mountains would throw back echoes. I guess nature has always been a big part of my music. We tend to build on what we know and what's around us, taking influence from our surroundings. It's a very primal part of human nature."

A lot has changed in music technology since those formative years, Ihsahn admits, pointing to how he's chosen to move with the times instead of linger in the shadows of a sentimental past. On his latest self-titled album — which consists of 11 tracks that exist in both metallic and orchestral forms — he's using amps that exist only inside a computer and Aristides composite guitars that contain no wood whatsoever. Such concepts would have seemed rather far-fetched to the young musician drag-



Ihsahn in action (with his Aristides 060 North Custom Ihsahn model) in Hellsinki, Finland, August 12, 2023

PREVIOUS PAGE: DAILY MIRROR/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES (STONES/BEATLES '64) THIS PAGE: MIIKKA SKAFFARI/REDFERNS

ging his amp onto that veranda.

"There were a lot of Neural DSP plug-ins, as well as digital Quad Cortex sounds," he says. "I see them as very practical tools for capturing ideas and inspiration. It's a million miles from the little Fostex recorder I started with. I remember me and my dad making our own cover of the Iron Maiden song 'Powerslave' — the drums and bass were from keyboards, I played guitar and my dad sang over it. That's where my fascination with recording began."

As for the Aristides guitars, which are made out of a patented composite material called Arium, it was Periphery guitarist Mark Holcomb who alerted Ihsahn to the Dutch company's innovations. Skeptical at first, as any player would be, further investigation would reveal that their instruments were more than up to scratch — at least to his well-trained ears. It's nice to root for the underdog, Ihsahn smiles, noting how they're going against the grain to produce futuristic guitars in an incredibly nostalgic business where the original designs still inspire a great deal of romance and loyalty.

"There have been attempts that gave the whole composite thing a bad rep, but Aristides pay so much attention to detail," he says. "I've been to the factory and seen them throw away perfectly fine guitars just because of a microscopic detail that *might* slightly affect something years later. There are no dead spots. They don't warp or detune when I travel. They're truly flawless instruments."

It's not like he's turned his back on all things analog and traditional, either. Blackstar, Marshall, Engl and Orange heads were captured via a Two Notes Torpedo Captor X. Pedals also came in handy, Ihsahn preferring the more transparent boosts and drives to those that come with a side order of tonal coloration. "A lot of those pedals can make your amp sound *smaller*, narrowing the frequency range down into something more nasal," he says. "That's why I love the more invisible ones like the Tyler Bryant signature TB Shakedown Special by Rodenberg, the pedals MLC are making in Poland and the Precision Drive by Horizon Devices. They add rather than subtract; they don't mess with the original sound."

The latest recordings aren't just impressive in terms of production, however. It's the sheer scale of the guitarist and singer's labyrinthine compositions, grand in design and ambition, that will leave just about any listener stunned. The overwhelming onslaught of violent musical extremes, at times very reminiscent of Emperor at their world-commanding best, also can offer its own elements of hope and inner-peace.

"Isn't that the case with all metal?" Ihsahn says with a laugh. "We've all been asked, 'Why do you listen to all that dark music?' And the answer is, 'Well, it makes me feel really fuckin' good!' The same goes for horror movies; there's an excitement there. Or reading [*Friedrich*] Nietzsche — he was so harsh and aggressive in his language, but his words make you feel *amazing*."

"We've all been asked, 'Why do you listen to all that dark music?' The answer is, 'It makes me feel really good!'"

And regardless of how intense the music may seem, there's a prevailing calmness in its execution. The man speaking with us today likens some of the frenetic-sounding chordal work to how one might strum an acoustic guitar, with a much looser attack than its initial aggression may suggest. Extreme metal can be so dense, he reasons, especially from a rhythmic standpoint.

"You really have to outline the nuances of the pulse in how you strum, almost exaggerating the subdivisions," Ihsahn says. "I perform those parts like I'm playing an acoustic, staying relaxed and calm. I've been using a new pick recently, the Dunlop Ultex 1mm, which has been a game-changer for me. The sharp edge allows me to be a lot more economical with my picking and the material gives me the string attack I want... which helps now I'm older and turning down the gain!"

INQUIRER
ALEX SKOLNICK

THE GENRE-HOPPING TESTAMENT GUITARIST TALKS FIRST GUITARS, FIRST GIGS AND ONE PARTICULARLY EMBARRASSING ON-STAGE MOMENT

Alex Skolnick performs in Bologna, Italy, in 2019

Q: What was your first guitar?
It was a classical guitar that I got very cheap at a garage sale. It was very difficult and challenging to play. I was about 10 when I got it, and it lasted about two years. Then I got an electric guitar that looked like an imitation of a Teisco Del Rey, and which was so thin, you could probably break it with one hand!

Q: What was the first song you learned to play on the guitar?
The first full song I learned was "Act Naturally" by the Beatles, as sung by Ringo Starr, which is almost a country song. Before that, the first thing I learned on a guitar was the riff to "Day Tripper," also by the Beatles. I learned how to play the notes by figuring out how to play it down by the bridge of the guitar, which gave it that surf quality. That was one of the first experiences that gave me the confidence to think that playing guitar was something I could do and potentially be good at. But at the time, I still didn't know the chords to "Day Tripper."

Q: What was your first gig?
I did my first gig with a band I still play with today, Testament, though the band was called Legacy back then. They already had a show booked at a venue that's become pretty legendary — Ruthie's Inn in Berkeley. At the time, though, we thought it was a place nobody was going to remember in 10 or 20 years, yet it went on to become a storied venue. The show was already on the calendar and the original guitar player had left the group, so there was a lot of pressure on me. But it was a very good incentive to improve my playing skills very quickly.

Q: Ever had an embarrassing moment on stage?
There was one time in the late Eighties, during one of the first tours with Testament. We were doing an open solo segment where I'd play for a few minutes by myself. One night as I was playing, there was suddenly no sound! Usually when that happens, the first thing you do is check the cable and the amp, but everything was working. Eventually, we found the problem; the pickup had shorted out. Here I was there on stage all on my own, not knowing what to do. And this was a heavy metal concert, so the crowd was getting antsy and starting to chant and boo. The band came back on, we switched guitars and moved on — but at the time it was really, really embarrassing.

"Don't try to sound too much like anybody else. It's a lesson you can't learn early enough"

Q: What's your current favorite piece of gear?
My 1976 Gibson L-5. I don't gig with it because it's one-of-a-kind and has a lot of sentimental value. But I've written a lot of songs on that guitar, songs I never expected I'd write. I normally think of it as something to play and to practice jazz on. The guitar is from a time where the quality was really strong, so you can just play it as is; it has a great tone too. It's been with me through thick and thin, through several years of my life and through different musical projects.

Q: The building is burning down. What single guitar from your collection would you save?
It would be that L-5. It's interesting because I'm better known for solid body electrics, but you know what? Those feel more replaceable somehow, while that guitar feels very irreplaceable. There's also another guitar I got about a year ago, a 1935 Gibson L-00 parlor guitar. It's just amazing. I almost always come up with a song idea on that guitar. Having said that, I'd probably grab both guitars — one in the case, and one in my hand.

Q: When was the last time you practiced?
Last night, to prepare for all the shows I'll be doing this year, focusing particularly for a show of instrumental music I'll be doing with Stu Hamm and Chad Wackerman. It is clearly the most challenging show this year, so I was going over a song called "Katahdin," which was originally on a recording with Stu, Steve Smith and Frank Gambale [The Light Beyond, *2000*].

Q: What aspect of the guitar would you like to be better at?
One thing I'm working on a lot lately is playing unaccompanied. In the whole first period of my professional experience, I was playing with a band, and I got used to the idea that there was always going to be a drummer. Then, as I got more interested in improvisation, I discovered more players who had a strong enough sense of rhythm and harmony to play unaccompanied while still [*keeping*] the music listenable. It's taken a while, but it's something I work on often, and there's been a noticeable improvement.

Q: What guitar-centric advice would you give your younger self if you had the chance?
Don't stress, don't try to keep up with anybody else, and don't try to sound too much like anybody else. It's a lesson you can't learn early enough.

— Joe Matera

ALESSANDRO BOSIO/PACIFIC PRESS/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

"I want to prove we're not a one-trick pony," Kane Strang says

Office Dog

FROM MELODIES TO OFF-KILTER RIFFS TO THE OCCASIONAL WALL OF SOUND, NEW ZEALAND INDIE VETERAN KANE STRANG DELIVERS THE SIX-STRING GOODS ON HIS TRIO'S DEBUT

By Andrew Daly

NEW ZEALAND NATIVE Kane Strang has been around for a bit, having released his debut, *A Pebble and a Paper Crane*, in 2013. Since then, he's continued releasing records, some of which are so indie you'd be hard-pressed to find them.

But if you're a newcomer, the name of Strang's game is creating all-consuming music via crunchy chords and fuzzy acoustics. "It's about finding sounds that enhance rather than distract," he says. "I like my guitar to sound big and wide, and I record through two amps at once, panning them in the mix."

It seems that methodology was applied to Office Dog — a band featuring Strang (guitars), Rassani Tolovaa (bass) and Mitchell Innes (drums) — and their new album, *Spiel*, which showcases vintage-sounding cuts like "Shade" and "The Crater." By the way, "sounding vintage isn't intentional," Strang says. "But we do record with vintage mics in the same room, which leads to a warm, nostalgic sound."

In terms of gear, Strang tend to stick with some old favorites. "I've been using the same two guitars for a decade," he says. "I've got a Fender Strat from when I was 16 — and a Larrivée acoustic. They lend themselves to my love of uneasy-sounding chords and discordant notes." Listening to "Hand in Hand," which Strang says best demonstrates his style, the joy in creating "uneasy" and "discordant" sounds is apparent. "I love to create tension and pretty yet dark songs. But I'm a sucker for a big outro and must force myself not to make every song erupt."

Given Strang's penchant for existing between bombast and restraint, Office Dog's next mission of supporting the ever-angular Dinosaur Jr. in support of *Spiel* is well-timed. "It's an honor," Strang says. "We're playing the Town Hall in Auckland, New Zealand. That'll be huge. I hope to win new fans and not make their wait for J [*Mascis*] too painful. But I would love to meet J; I want to keep improving, and the best way, aside from writing songs, is to talk to people like J and listen."

"I want to keep improving, and the best way, aside from writing songs, is to talk to people like J Mascis and listen"

Strang likes to ping-pong between projects, so who knows what's next for him. For the time being, he's not looking beyond the task at hand.

"We went from nearly self-releasing *Speil* to working with [*Nashville and Athens, Georgia-based*] New West Records," he says. "So now I want to prove we're not a one-trick pony — and that we have a lot more to say."

LIAM TAYLOR

"Tracii Guns and I became close," Sam Bam Koltun says. "I'm extremely grateful [*to have*] him as a mentor"

Sam Bam Koltun

HE'S ALREADY PLAYING WITH FASTER PUSSYCAT, DOROTHY AND BUDDERSIDE, BUT WE GET THE FEELING THIS L.A.-BASED GUITARIST COULD SQUEEZE A FEW MORE BANDS INTO HIS SCHEDULE

By Andrew Daly

AT 28, SAM Bam Koltun is an odd juxtaposition alongside the elder statesmen he pals around with. But that's no bother. "It's not too weird," he says. "I came up as a kid playing in bars when I was 12, so even then, the guys I played with were older. I'm conditioned to working with older musicians."

That's good news for him, as Koltun is an integral part of Faster Pussycat, which featured guitarists Brent Muscat and Ace Von Johnson before him. "Ace is one of my best friends," Koltun says. "He was with Faster, but when Tracii [*Guns*] recruited him for L.A Guns, Ace asked if I wanted to join Faster in 2019. Five years later, here I am!"

For the Les Paul-slinging Koltun, Guns, a fellow single-cut devotee, is of note, as he and Koltun have become friends. "Tracii has been so important. I've always loved his playing, and when Ace got sick in 2022, he asked me to fill in with L.A. Guns. Tracii and I became close; I'm extremely grateful [*to have*] him as a mentor."

Old guard aside, Koltun makes time for musicians his age — specifically with hard rocker Dorothy [*aka Dorothy Martin*], whom he's toured and sometimes recorded with. "Dorothy and I connected on Instagram," he says. "She messaged me that she and Ace were friends, and we kept talking. Ace brought me to the Viper Room one night, and Dorothy was there. She liked what she heard and asked me to join her band. I've been there ever since."

As a '72 Black Beauty-wielding gun for hire, Koltun lends his skills to other acts, but he makes time for his own work, too, with Budderside. "I joined a different version of Budderside," he says. "But I've put together a new lineup and am writing new music, like 'Good for Nothing,' which is hard-hitting and captures my intensity."

But Koltun doesn't have too much time to devote, as he remains busy with Faster Pussycat and Dorothy. He's also joined Tommy Henriksen's [*Alice Cooper*] Crossbone Skully, so free time is at a premium. "That doesn't bother me," he says. "I like to keep moving. It'll be across-the-board touring and new projects. I'll work on my stuff, but I can't stress enough how grateful I am. I'll try to put on a good show and be ready. You'll see and hear a lot of me this year."

"Ace Von Johnson asked if I wanted to join Faster Pussycat in 2019. Five years later, here I am!"

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MY PEDALBOARD

JEFF SCHROEDER

WHAT THE FORMER SMASHING PUMPKINS GUITARIST SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

Interview by Andrew Daly

"I HAD AN existential crisis with my pedalboard after leaving the Smashing Pumpkins. I had nothing else besides my touring rig based on my Revv Generator 120s and Line 6 Helix. My board is a work in progress, but here's what I've been using lately.

"I took a modular approach using one main board and one satellite. I wanted it to be malleable without sacrificing tone. In the summer of '23, the Smashing Pumpkins toured with Rival Sons, and I spent a lot of time with their guitarist, Scott Holiday. Although simplified, the board I put together is inspired by what he's doing.

"My board's heart is the Line 6 Helix [*multi-effects floor processor*]. I use it in many ways: straight into the PA using a combination of pedal and amp models, the Helix preamps into a power amp and cabinet, or strictly as an effects unit running into standalone amps.

"I could easily use the Helix alone, but I like incorporating other pedals, hence the hybrid nature. The signal chain is: guitar into Helix; the output of the Helix into a PA or mixing console, into amps, or both. Connected to the Helix are three separate pedal chains, two mono and one stereo. Effects Loop one contains a Mid-Fi Electronics Demo Tape Fuzz, an EarthQuaker Devices Special Cranker [*overdrive*] and an Analog Man modded Boss DS-1 [*distortion*].

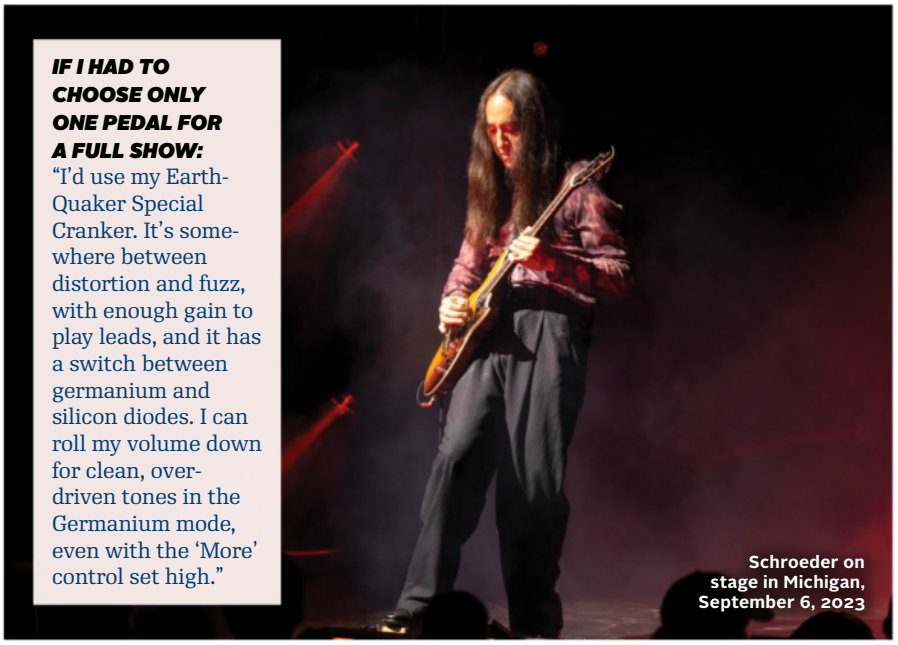
"Effects Loop two contains three EarthQuaker Devices pedals: the Aurelius [*Tri-Voice Chorus*], Rainbow Machine [*Polyphonic Pitch Mesmerizer*] and the Afterneath [*V2 Reverb*]. Effects Loop three and four are combined in stereo.

"Here are the pedals on the satellite board: an EarthQuaker Devices Avalanche Run [*Stereo Reverb & Delay with Tap Tempo*], Line 6 HX One [*multi-effects floor processor*], Eventide H90 [*Harmonizer Multi FX*], Vongon Polyphrase [*Stereo Echo and Looping Device*] and Vongon Ultrasheer [*Pitch Vibrato and Reverb*]. The secondary board is mainly for solo guitar playing.

"The wonderful thing about using Helix as the heart of the board is I can insert combinations of loops into the signal chain. I have many signal chains within my Helix presets that combine the effects within Helix itself and the pedals. There are endless possibilities, and it's easy to bypass everything and go straight into a real or modeled amp."

"I had an existential crisis with my pedalboard after leaving the Smashing Pumpkins"

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONLY ONE PEDAL FOR A FULL SHOW: "I'd use my EarthQuaker Special Cranker. It's somewhere between distortion and fuzz, with enough gain to play leads, and it has a switch between germanium and silicon diodes. I can roll my volume down for clean, overdriven tones in the Germanium mode, even with the 'More' control set high."



Schroeder on stage in Michigan, September 6, 2023

COURTESY OF JEFF SCHROEDER (BOARD) SCOTT LEGATO/GETTY IMAGES (SCHROEDER)

Lety Beers [*left*] and Pat Beers

The Schizophonics

THESE ANTSY SAN DIEGO ROCKERS PUT ON A SHOW YOU'RE NOT LIKELY TO FORGET — AND ALL WITHOUT THE AID OF A HIGH E STRING

By Mark McStea

THE SAN DIEGO-based Schizophonics are one of those bands that, once seen, are never forgotten. Singer/guitarist Pat Beers literally throws himself into every performance, careering around the stage, combining elements of James Brown, Wayne Kramer and Iggy Pop. To the uninitiated, it often looks like Beers isn't even playing the guitar a lot of the time, as a huge part of his technique relies on the use of left-hand slurs and hammer-ons. "We've done tours where we've opened for bigger bands, and audiences who don't know us would be messaging that they couldn't believe we'd have the audacity to use backing tapes," Beers says.

It's clear from listening to Beers that Jimi Hendrix must have been an influence somewhere down the line. "I had a cassette of *Are You Experienced*, and that was huge for me," he says. "Jimi's still my favorite guitarist. His playing completely floored me. My left hand does a lot of work live, and I think that's where you can see the Hendrix influence — in the big bends and hammer-ons. A few years later I really got into the Stooges and the MC5 — their songwriting, their riffs and the fact that they were great performers."

"Audiences who don't know us would be messaging that they couldn't believe we'd have the audacity to use backing tapes"

Beers' choice of guitar is as unconventional as his approach to playing. "I have a custom-made model by Bonser [*Instruments*] in San Diego," he says. "It's really a Strat in disguise; it has a Strat neck with jumbo frets and hot pickups by Seymour Duncan. It's a five-string guitar, since I don't use a high E string. That came from when I broke a tuning peg, and I decided to devote a year to really working on a more linear left-hand approach. I just like the sound of a fatter B string — played higher up the neck — than a normal thin E string. I plug into a Vox AC30 and a Boss Blues Driver, which I leave on all the time with a fairly low level of distortion. For the solos, I kick on a Roger Mayer Axis Fuzz."

Given Beers' frenetic live approach, he admits to finding it difficult to rein things in when in the studio. "I notice when I try to play 'normal,' I can't get the same kind of weird bends and feel that I get when playing live, so I try to reproduce that approach in the studio, although I'm obviously pretty limited in how much I can jump around." According to Beers, his wife Lety, who plays drums in the band, is unfazed by the prospect of him doing a serious injury to himself. "I think she's so used to it by now, that if anything happened, she'd just give me a look." [*Laughs*]

The Schizophonics plan to go into the studio in the near future to begin work on their fourth album, having already tested out a number of songs live. "Who knows if they'll make it to the album, but I always like to put new songs into the show. I like the idea of having some songs that don't appear on a record."

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Through Infinity and Beyond

BEN WEINMAN DISCUSSES THE UNEXPECTED RETURN OF THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN AND THE MAKING OF THEIR LANDMARK DEBUT ALBUM, 1999'S *CALCULATING INFINITY*

By Gregory Adams

BEN WEINMAN HADN'T planned on playing Dillinger Escape Plan songs in 2024. Back in 2017, the New Jersey guitarist thought he'd concluded the chaotic fusion extremists' 20-year run at the top of their game, specifically while stomping out the irregular-shifting mosh of "43% Burnt," perhaps the band's most iconic bit of brutality. Since then, Weinman has happily spent time scoring film projects and thrashing rhythms with crossover mainstays Suicidal Tendencies. That all changes this June when Dillinger celebrate the silver anniversary of their manically experimental debut album, 1999's *Calculating Infinity*, with a rare trio of headlining dates in New York and a warmup set at Pomona, California's No Values festival. Though the outfit's meter-defying return is highly anticipated, Weinman had reservations about reviving the Plan.

"I had no intentions of breaking up with the thought of doing it again later as a reunion," the guitarist says of Dillinger's initial implosion. "As far as I was concerned, when I walked offstage at the end of 2017, I felt completely satisfied."

What changed his mind was an opportunity to step onstage with the band's original all-rage howler, Dimitri Minakakis — a high school friend who departed Dillinger in 2001. A recent run of similarly nostalgic shows supporting Suicidal Tendencies' 1983 self-titled debut also opened Weinman's eyes to bringing *Calculating Infinity* to a new generation of music fans. "As a fan of Suicidal, it's cool to be playing the songs that were the start of everything and are still very relevant — like 'Institutionalized.' And seeing the *kids* of the original fans going off at these shows was really inspiring."

The roots of the Dillinger Escape Plan, meanwhile, lay in a straight-forward Nineties hardcore band called Arcane, whom the competitive Weinman admits weren't pushing the needle in their local basement circuit. Citing a need to "put the pedal to the metal," the new plan was to obnoxiously smash drummer Chris Pennie's progressive concussive-ness against the youthful rage bubbling within Weinman. "I was angry. I wanted to vent everything [*into the music*]. So, he was pushing me on a technical side, and I was pushing him on a more visceral side," Weinman says.

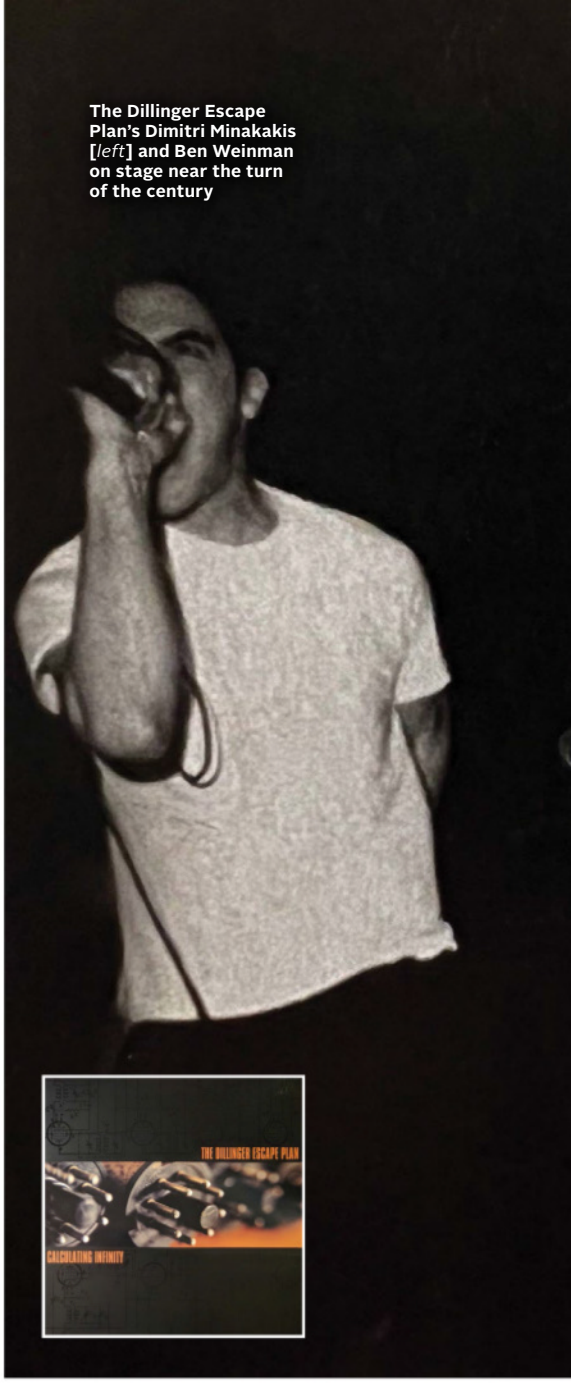
While Dillinger Escape Plan's self-titled debut EP remained reasonably linear, 1998 breakthrough EP *Under the Running Board* — their first release for Relapse Records — dumped death metal, Seventies jazz fusion, Afro-Cuban rhythms and the complex electronic sculpting of Aphex Twin "into a blender to make something completely new." The next year's *Calculating Infinity* was a wide-scale sensory overload, where pieces like "Destro's Secret" peppered clean-channel jazz-bop around the otherwise panicked polyrhythmia of Weinman's atonal, diminished dyad stacking. "We weren't interested in someone being able to tap their foot to it," Weinman says of Dillinger's most quizzical frameworks. He'll confess that he wasn't quite sure how to play most of it live, either.

"I wasn't playing accurately in the beginning; I was just going crazy," he says with a laugh. "As people became fans of the band, though, I realized, 'Oh shit... they really want to hear what I recorded!' It became a balance of visceral expression and actually trying to play. It also became kind of an unsaid requirement of whomever our second guitarist was: Help lock this down, because Ben's falling all over the place. It was important that we glued it all together, [*rather than be*] some kind of WWE wrestling show."

Dillinger Escape Plan were an intimidating live force — Weinman's hazardous, Jackson-swinging stage presence led to numerous self-induced head wounds, a rotator cuff injury and a skull fracture, among other maladies — but they also juxtaposed that reckless energy against gleefully madcap musical references to 19th-century composer Julius Fučík. "A misconception people had about us was that we were super-serious, elitist, snobby art jerks that put our nose up at typical punk and metal bands, but most of the bands we ended up touring with saw that we were clowns," he says in relation to quoting the big top fanfare of "Entry of the Gladiators" — the quintessential circus music cue — in *Calculating Infinity*'s tap-deranged "Sugar Coated Sour."

Despite being the songwriter, Weinman maintains he wasn't much of a technical player at first. *Running Board* co-guitarist John Fulton, however, was a practice-obsessed musician who could handle any obtuse scale blitz Weinman threw his way, at least until Fulton quit the band to study computer science. Weinman also fondly recalls how founding bassist Adam Doll was just as dialed into the mania, from a performance perspective — sadly, a car accident left the rhythm stringer paralyzed from the chest down just before the group hit the studio to cut *Calculating Infinity*.

"The band had hoped that he would eventually recover to the point where he could play with us again, but we knew it wasn't going to be any time soon," Weinman says of the tragedy. "We didn't want



The Dillinger Escape Plan's Dimitri Minakakis [*left*] and Ben Weinman on stage near the turn of the century

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"I broke rules intentionally, and I made it part of our vocabulary"

this thing to fall apart, so we had to go forward so that there was something for Adam to come back to. I was extremely freaked out, because I did not have the confidence that I could create this album without these guys' help. The level of playing on *Calculating* was an overcompensation for that, for sure — the nervousness of not fulfilling my own expectations. It was fueled by anxiety."

Despite this, producer Steve Evetts managed to whip Weinman into shape while obsessively multi-tracking guitars and bass straight-to-tape at South River, New Jersey's Trax East studio [*"No ProTools... no cutting and pasting"*]. While the guitarist's dexterous skills improved significantly, an anxious feeling remained in the music. Take the hyper-speed blast sections of *Calculating* classics "43% Burnt" and "Jim Fear," where Weinman confoundingly complements frenetic phrases with a seconded-layer just a semi-tone up.

"I broke rules intentionally, and I made it part of our vocabulary," he says of the aesthetic. "It sounds out of tune, essentially, but almost every lead run on the record was doubled with a half-step harmony; that continued through the career of the band. It sounded circus-y. Quirky. Uncomfortable. That, along with dissonant jazz scales or diminished whole tones, became a major ingredient of our sound."

Weinman remembers keeping things relatively low-gain to highlight the percussive complexity of his riffs, blending an Ampeg VH-140C with an "uber-clean" DI. He might've played a Jackson with EMGs at some point, but he notes that the record's spanky-sounding cleans were played on a piezo-loaded Parker Fly — and he hasn't seen one since. What was most important to Weinman was harnessing his stage-rage in a studio setting. "Steve Evetts always said tone was in your hands, [*and*] I beat the shit out of my guitars. I picked very aggressively. Broke many strings. That contributed to the sound of the album."

Though Weinman handled most of *Calculating Infinity*, guitarist Brian Benoit joined the act mid-way through the making of the album. They'd met in 1998 when Dillinger were on tour with Benoit's previous band, Jesuit. While that Virginia Beach quartet were steeped in a sludge-heavy sound, Weinman learned that Benoit had chops to spare; that tour he offered to join the band, should their situation ever change. The next year he moved to New Jersey and wrote a pivotal breakdown on "Variations on a Cocktail Dress." He was fully ingrained in the lineup by 2002's *Irony Is a Dead Scene* EP.

The full *Calculating*-era lineup won't be reuniting in New York; Benoit retired from full-time musicianship in 2004 after suffering severe nerve damage in his hands and neck; Pennie hasn't played with them since 2007. Weinman and Minakakis will be joined by mid-'00s guitarist James Love, bassist Liam Wilson and drummer Billy Rymer. Dillinger Escape Plan's founding riffer, however, is grateful to get the chance to revisit the period and reflect on the formative chaos of the early days.

"We were siphoning gas to get from show to show. We were playing coffee shops and getting in trouble because Dimitri would get up on the counter and knock over coffee machines, pissing off patrons... All that stuff was so memorable and so important."

So far, Dillinger's return is a limited-time thing. Weinman's main gig remains with Suicidal Tendencies, who he'd joined in 2018. Plans are in flux, but they're entertaining the idea of writing their first album of originals since 2016's *World Gone Mad*. Considering the multiple legacies he's honoring, Weinman laughs when asked whether he ever drops Dillinger-style half-step harmonies into sacred Suicidal thrashers like "Institutionalized."

"Dean Pleasants is the lead guitar player and has been for a very long time, but I do have opportunities to do ad-libs," he says. "Suicidal encourages free expression and improv. That's what's cool, the different kinds of players — like gospel drummers, or bass players that aren't typically from the metal world. It's never frowned upon to throw your own flavors in."

[*from left*] Eric Clapton, John Lennon and Keith Richards play "Yer Blues" in December 1968

[*facing*] Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger share a train carriage (first class, of course) at London's Euston Station in August 1967

Come Together

THE BEATLES VS. THE ROLLING STONES? NOT SO MUCH! HERE'S OUR GUIDE TO 10 FRIENDLY — AND OCCASIONALLY EXCELLENT — COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN TWO LEGENDARY BANDS

By Damian Fanelli

WAS THERE A rivalry between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the Sixties? Sure. Was it ever serious? Not really. Is it something you're gonna read about in this story? Not at all. In fact, we're actually gonna head off in the opposite direction and discuss 60 years' (and counting) worth of collaborations between these two extremely influential British bands, collaborations that — according to the Stones' Keith Richards — are the result of a unique relationship.

"There's always been an open door between the Beatles and the Stones," Richards told *Guitar Player* while promoting the Stones' 2023 album, *Hackney Diamonds*, which — hey, whaddya know? — features former Beatle Paul McCartney on bass on one track. "We were the only ones that knew what it's like to have that extreme kind of fame in the 1960s, so that created a bond." Come to think of it, maybe that's why Mick Jagger inducted the Beatles into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame — or why Richards and McCartney sometimes hang out together while on vacation in places like Turks and Caicos.

Below, we've pinpointed 10 tracks on which the Beatles and the Stones — as bands or as solo artists — are somehow connected. And, by the way, if you *do* want to read about the Beatles/Stones rivalry, be sure to check out John McMillian's excellent *Beatles vs. Stones* (Simon & Schuster, 2013) or "Beatles vs. the Rolling Stones: A History of Their Legendary Rivalry" over at Variety.com.

THE PLAYERS

BEATLES

John Lennon / Paul McCartney / George Harrison / Ringo Starr

STONES

Mick Jagger / Keith Richards / Brian Jones / Mick Taylor / Ronnie Wood / Bill Wyman / Charlie Watts

"I Wanna Be Your Man" — The Rolling Stones

"THE BEATLES AND the Stones have been basically joined together at the hips from the beginning," Richards told *GP*. "We were totally different bands, but we knew each other well." So it makes perfect sense that when Lennon and McCartney bumped

into the Stones (or Stones producer/manager Andrew Loog-Oldham, depending on which version of the legend you subscribe to) on a London street in October 1963, they were invited to the Stones' recording session at De Lane Lea Studio. It turned out the Stones were in the market for a commercial song, and John and Paul (especially Paul) had just the thing, a feisty roots-rocker called "I Wanna Be Your Man." Keef & Co. recorded it, and — *voila* — they had their first U.K. top 20 hit. The Beatles also recorded it (for *With the Beatles*), and both versions actually came out that November.

"We Love You"
"Dandelion"
The Rolling Stones
"All You Need Is Love"
"You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)"
The Beatles

WE'VE LUMPED THESE tracks together because they were recorded around the same time — May to July 1967 — back when the Beatles, Stones, Kinks, Who, Small Faces, Animals, Yardbirds, Moody Blues and every other trending British band were hanging out night after night at clubs like the Bag O'Nails in London. We can just imagine the semi-drunken conversations: "Hey, man! We're recording another single tomorrow. Come on down and do some backin' vocals! It'll be great!" Because that's pretty much what happened; Lennon and McCartney sang backing vocals on the Stones' "We Love You" and "Dandelion," which were released as the A- and B-sides of a single in August. And even though you can't really hear them, Richards and Jagger (and a bunch of other famous people) joined in on the chorus on the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love," which came out in July.

One person you can definitely hear is Brian Jones, who plays alto sax on the Beatles' "You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)," which wasn't unleashed until 1970, almost a year after Jones' death.

"Yer Blues"
The Dirty Mac

IN DECEMBER 1968, the Stones hosted a little something called *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*, a concert film — directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg — that was shot on a soundstage in front of a studio audience. The Stones performed a few tunes, as did the Who, Jethro Tull (with Tony Iommi), Taj Mahal, Marianne Faithfull and a one-off supergroup called the Dirty Mac. How super were they? Well, there was a Beatle (Lennon), a Stone (Richards), Eric Clapton (who was either still a member of Cream or was a few days away from

becoming a former member) and Mitch Mitchell from the Jimi Hendrix Experience. They played two numbers — "Yer Blues," a song that had appeared on the Beatles' one-month-old White Album, and something called "Whole Lotta Yoko" — before disbanding forever. We should probably mention that Lindsay-Hogg went on to direct the Beatles' *Get Back/Let It Be* film just a month later.

"Far East Man"
Ronnie Wood / George Harrison

IN 1974, RONNIE Wood and George Harrison co-wrote a song called "Far East Man" and then proceeded to record their own respective versions of it. OK, we know what you're thinking: "Hey, Ronnie Wood wasn't a Rolling Stone in 1974!" OK, that's true, but we've got a pair of aces up our sleeve:
1. Wood (who became a Stone in 1975) was deeply entrenched in the Stones' inner circle by 1974, having already taken part in the original "It's Only Rock 'n Roll (But I Like It)" sessions in late '73.
2. Harrison plays slide guitar on Wood's version, which also happens to feature Mick Taylor — a bona-fide Stone — on bass.

"Dead Giveaway"
Ringo Starr

WOOD RECORDED "FAR East Man" for his first solo album, *I've Got My Own Album to Do*. It's a star-studded affair featuring a bunch of Wood's famous friends, including Richards, Jagger, Taylor, Harrison, Rod Stewart and David Bowie. It turns out Ringo Starr was also a big fan of the "famous friends" approach to recording solo records, and Wood was one of several friends who showed up when Ringo was recording *Stop and Smell the Roses*, his 1981 album. Wood even brought a song with him — the sneaky "Dead Giveaway" — which he and Starr finished up in the studio, thus giving birth to the universe's only Starkey/Wood composition.

"Love Letters"
Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings

HARRISON PLAYS SOME beautifully understated slide guitar on this generally ignored track by Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings, the band Wyman formed after leaving the Stones in the early Nineties. Although we'll probably never be able to pinpoint "George Harrison's final slide guitar guest appearance," this track is certainly a contender, since he died in November 2001, just a few months after Wyman's album (*Double Bill*) was released. Other contenders include Jim Capaldi's "Anna Julia" and ELO's "Long Time Gone," both of which were also released in 2001.

"Bite My Head Off"
The Rolling Stones

PEOPLE WEREN'T NECESSARILY surprised when they found out McCartney appeared on the Stones' *Hackney Diamonds* in 2023; after all, there's that whole "famous person bond" thing that Richards was talking about. But they might've been mildly shocked that the song in question was the snarling, nasty, punky "Bite My Head Off," which doesn't exactly make you think of McCartney, the guy who wrote "Yesterday," "Blackbird" and "Sweetest Little Show."

"[*Paul*] had been doing some work with [Hackney Diamonds *producer*] Andrew Watt as well, and he happened to be around and dropped by," Richards told *GP*. "I don't even think he intended to play bass on a track, but once he was there, I just said, 'Come on, you're in. You ain't leaving until you play!' [*Laughs*] To be honest, if Paul had come another day, he'd probably have been on a different song. It wasn't calculated. It just happened to be the flavor of the month that day."

MARK AND COLLEEN HAYWARD/REDFERNS (LEFT) VICTOR BLACKMAN/EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

"To be successful, you've gotta be like John Mayer, but I have other dreams," Cameron Griffin says

PROVIDED/PR

Cameron Griffin

THIS FORMER CONSTRUCTION WORKER IS NO FAN OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS; HE JUST WANTS TO PLAY

By Andrew Daly

CAMERON GRIFFIN HAS gone from working in construction to being a Grammy nominee for his work on Coco Jones' 2022 EP, *What I Didn't Tell You*. That's pretty astounding, and he's enjoyed the ride, but he remains tempered.

"Being recognized is amazing," he says. "But I don't like how the music business is. To be successful, you've gotta be like John Mayer, but I have other dreams. I play guitar, but I'm not a 'guitar player.' I'm Cameron, who plays guitar."

The fact that Griffin doesn't wholly identify as a guitar player — despite having worked with Usher, Chris Brown and others — seems hard to fathom. "All of this — writing songs, guitar and producing — came suddenly," he says. "I never thought about any of it until about four years ago."

Four years ago, Griffin was a Los Angeles kid playing linebacker at UCLA and strumming his guitar in a dorm room. He'd been at it for years, but guitar was just a hobby, not his life's work. Or so he thought.

"It was Covid," he says. "My stuff with Summer Walker [*"Secret" by 21 Savage feat. Summer Walker*] came out in 2020 — and [*then*] all these opportunities came along. I evaluated the life I wanted and the trajectory. Once I jumped, I spent a lot of time and energy on it. But Covid was the push; I went for it after that."

Griffin is even-keeled for someone who's had sudden success. He attributes this to keeping things "smooth and intentional," adding, "I never want to be boastful; I don't like being the center of attention. Even my guitar playing is like that — lots of melody and nice chords; nothing crazy."

Ready or not, Griffin *is* in the spotlight. "The Grammys are huge," he says. "I went from construction work to this... It's an honor, but life isn't about wins and losses. It's about looking forward. It's easy to get distracted. I reached my goals quickly, but I'm not restricting myself, and I'll focus not just on guitar but all aspects of my business. It's going to be interesting."

"I don't like being the center of attention. Even my guitar playing is like that — lots of melody and nice chords; nothing crazy"

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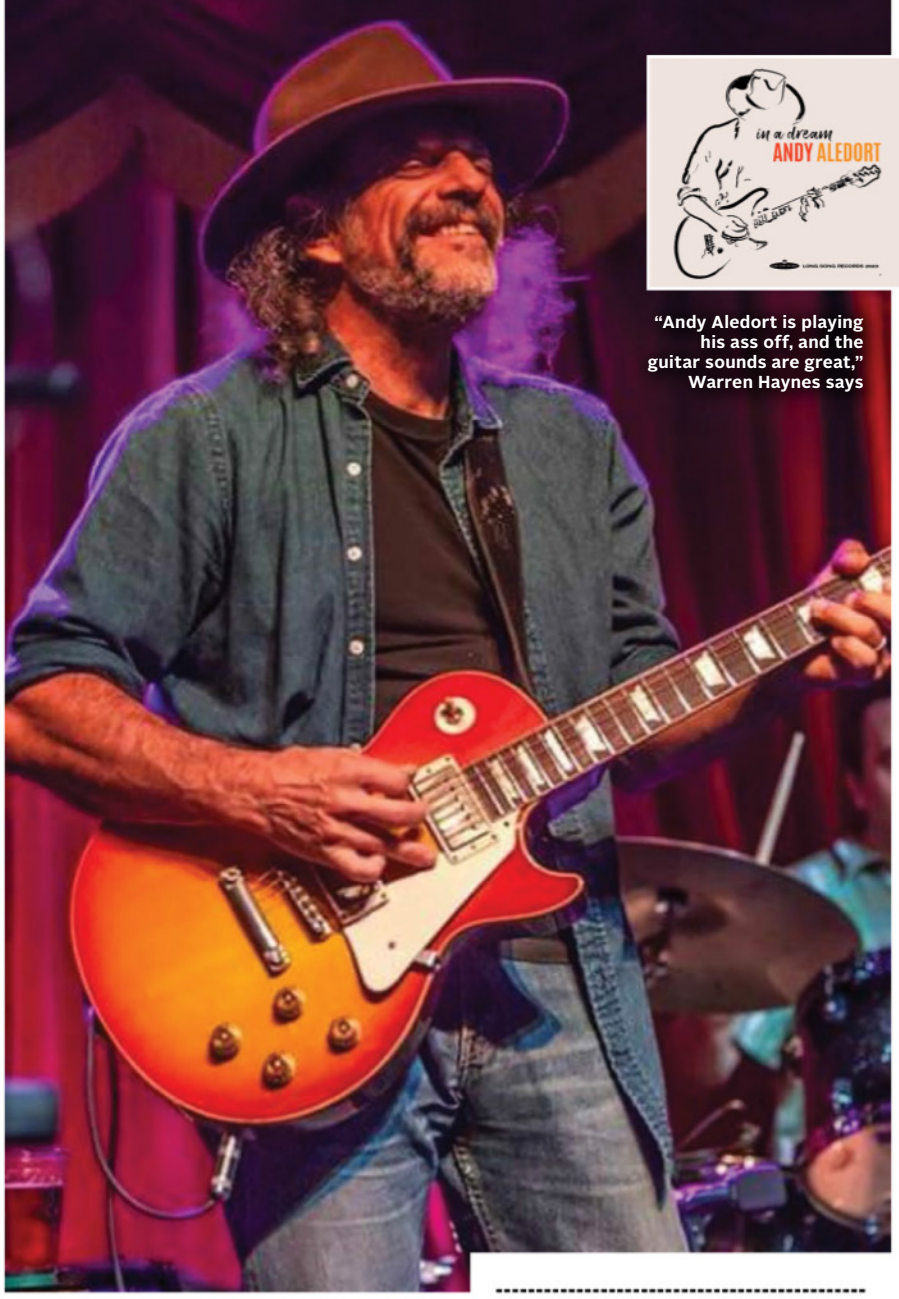

"Andy Aledort is playing his ass off, and the guitar sounds are great," Warren Haynes says

Andy Aledort

THE VETERAN GUITARIST'S NEW ALBUM, *IN A DREAM*, FEATURES TEXAS GREAT DAVID GRISSOM, PLUS COVERS OF JIMI HENDRIX, CREAM AND ALBERT KING

By Alan Paul

ANDY ALEDORT HAS been at the pinnacle of American guitardom for decades. He's toured the world with Dickey Betts, played with Double Trouble and the Band of Gypsys, co-written a best-selling biography of Stevie Ray Vaughan, jammed with a who's who of six-string greats from Johnny Winter to Buddy Guy to Joe Perry, and taught half the world to play guitar as an instructor and journalist (Aledort is an associate editor at *GW*; check out his latest column on page 82). He is now coming into his own as a solo artist, as evidenced by *In a Dream*.

Aledort's new album includes traces of all the people he's played with and written about, from Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles and Frank Zappa to John Scofield, Eric Clapton and SRV. These and other influences are integrated into a personal style that reflects his deep immersion into the history of the electric guitar and his own originality.

It's fitting that three of the songs came to Aledort in dreams, as they represent a seamless merger of so many musical ideas and traditions coming together in his subconscious mind and emerging fully hatched.

"When you wake up with a song already written, it makes songwriting much easier," Aledort says with a laugh. "For 'Cotton Sham,' I dreamt I was jamming with Sam the Sham of the Pharaohs. For 'Hymn,' in the dream I was listening to a live Allman Brothers album, and they were playing exactly what's heard on the record. I woke up and thought, 'That's not an Allman Brothers song!' And the melody of 'In a Dream' was clear as a bell from the moment I woke up. *In a Dream* seemed to be the perfect name for the album."

Albert King's "Can't You See What You're Doing to Me" features Texas guitar great David Grissom. "Unexpectedly, David walked into the studio, and I asked if he'd play on a track. When he said yes, I showed the guys the Albert tune specifically for David, who said, 'Anything by Mr. King is good with me!'"

In a Dream has already earned praise from a host of legendary players. Warren Haynes says, "Andy's playing his ass off, and the guitar sounds are great. I really love the harmonized slide guitars on 'Hymn' as well as the jazzier tunes. On 'Moonwaves,' I dig how he's mixing Hendrix and Zappa vibes." Joe Satriani adds, "Nice playing all over this album! The cover of Jimi Hendrix's 'Pali Gap' sounds killer, and 'Moonwaves' is awesome."

"When you wake up with a song already written, it makes songwriting much easier"

Finally, Steve Vai says, "*In a Dream* reveals Andy's authentic love of blues, and it shines through in the atmosphere he created. He is burning an old torch in a new way and it works. It's great to have a record like this that captures that authenticity."

DEREK MCCABE

The Devil's Music

STRAY CATS LEGEND BRIAN SETZER DISCUSSES HIS SMOKIN' LATEST, *THE DEVIL ALWAYS COLLECTS*, PLUS BLOWN SPEAKERS, GEAR, RIFF WRITING AND HOW HE STAYS INSPIRED

By Andrew Daly

THROUGH IMAGERY STEEPED in fast cars, flashy guitars and flaming licks, since the earliest days of the Stray Cats and later with his namesake Orchestra, Brian Setzer has blazed a trail of his own creation. It took a certain level of fearlessness to play rockabilly in the early Eighties, let alone have world-wide success. And it took an even greater level of courage to pivot to swing and jive in the Nineties, when grunge and Britpop, propped up by MTV, reigned supreme.

"I don't know if it was fearlessness — or just me being stubborn," Setzer says. "I'm stubborn enough to refuse to follow along with whatever is going on at the time. I've always been someone who needs to follow his own trail. Trends be damned — I can't follow them. I have to do what I want. Rockabilly was ignored before the Stray Cats started, so I feel proud to hold up that crown. We brought it back in a big way and did it the way we wanted. We didn't just cover songs from the Fifties; we wrote our own songs and came up with riffs that wouldn't have been thought of in the Fifties. That's my badge right there; I wear it proudly."

Setzer's latest release is a blazing slice of rockabilly called *The Devil Always Collects*, the satisfying follow-up to 2021's *Gotta Have the Rumble*. He recently opened up about the new record, his creative process and how he stays inspired after all these decades.

Q: Tell me about how *The Devil Always Collects* got started.

This album started like most of mine — when I came up with a guitar riff. I came up with the riff for "Rock Boys Rock." It was so simple that I was like, "Hasn't this been done before?" I went back to make sure, and sure enough, it hadn't been done before. It always starts with the riffs, and then the song will build from there. Then I'll start thinking, "It would be cool if I shouted, 'rock boys, rock,'" which is pretty catchy. So that's how this record started, and it built up from there similarly, like, with "Black Leather Jacket," as another example.

Q: How do you keep from being repetitive when writing riffs?

There's no secret to it, really. I just need to pick up the guitar and play. I just need to play, even if it means stumbling around with something I've already done. I might be messing around with a riff I wrote 40 years ago, like "Stray Cat Strut," because it's familiar. But then, suddenly, I'll come up with something new while doing that. I can grab my guitar right now and play you a riff you've probably never heard before, just a little boogie-woogie [*Brian grabs his guitar and plays some boogie-woogie*]. Can you hear that? I know it's random, but it's new. And even if there's a mistake in there, or it's super flat, I can work on it, and maybe it'll become a riff. Sometimes the mistakes are the riffs that stick.

Q: How often would you say your riffs are happy accidents rather than premeditated?

Usually, it happens all at once. When I turn the faucet on and write songs, it'll start to flow like crazy. People laugh at me; I still use old cassette recorders and write things down musically. Because being able to record it doesn't mean you can play it back, right? So having it written down is a great backup. That said, I have old riffs lying around; I'll pull out my old cassette recorder, put it on at night, and say, "Hey, there's one. I wonder if I can use that for something..." It's kinda like having a library full of riffs.

Q: What's your process for solos?

I usually go in with a rough outline of what I want to do. But I don't strictly follow it, per se. Of course, when I play the solo from "Stray Cat Strut" or "Rock This Town," I play them as I wrote them because they've become trademarks. I won't ever change those because everyone knows them too well. But with other songs, and when recording new songs, a lot happens on the fly. I'll usually have some sort of roadmap where I know what notes I want to hit, but how I connect them is often improvised.

Q: How do you decide what gear you're going to deploy?

Whatever sound I want to get must come out of the Fender Bassman. So if I want tremolo, I've got to get an outboard piece of gear and bring it in because I can't lose my sound. It's the same with reverb; if I want to use a little reverb, I'll have to hook it up to the amp.

Brian Setzer in Minneapolis in 2019 with a vintage Gretsch White Penguin

TONY NELSON/FUTURE

"So I'd blow the speakers and keep putting bigger ones in, and pretty soon, you've got a Marshall"

Q: How about guitars? Is it always hollowbodies, or do you mix in others?

Usually, if I stray too far away from hollowbody guitars, I lose my sound. But I did end up using a Gretsch Duo Jet on this album, which is different. And I know; it's still an aggressive guitar, but it's basically a solidbody. It has chambers, but it's not a traditional hollowbody guitar. It kinda came out of nowhere; it had been sitting around, and I grabbed it, turned it up a little louder than usual, and I was like, "There it is... there's the sound." It's almost like a Tele, soundwise, but a little different. The pickups in the Duo Jet are single coil, though, so there's this old hi-fi sound to them.

Q: Did using the Duo Jet inspire you to venture down new avenues?

That's a good question. You can get more meat out of a solidbody guitar when you're up in the higher registers than with a hollowbody. That's just the way it is. And I don't do a lot of string-bending to the extent where I'm bending up a whole step, but I found that I could do more with the Duo Jet. Anytime I've tried to do a lot of string-bending on a hollowbody, it turns into a violin-sounding instrument. It doesn't speak; it gets thinner. But with the Duo Jet, it stays the same as it's solid.

Q: Buddy Guy recently sang the praises of his Fifties Fender Bassman. Is yours of the same vintage?

Mine is a '63, so it's the white Tolex model. And the thing about the white Tolex Bassman amps — the ones with the big circuits — is they have a solid-state rectifier, which tightens up the sound. But the Bassman amps from the Fifties are different; they're more squishy sounding. And then you have the other ones, which are the Blackface ones, which are too brittle. I don't play with a lot of overdrive, so I need more of a clean sound; the '63 white Tolex sits right in the middle, and the circuitry is right for what I need.

Q: Is your Bassman all original, or have you needed to replace any components?

The good thing is I've got a few of them now, so I don't rely on just one. The ideal thing to do is to keep them original, but I haven't always been able to do that. The first thing that usually happens is you blow the speakers, which happened a bunch of times to me years back when I started to become popular and play larger venues. And the reason I blew the speakers is I thought I needed to play louder, which I didn't. But that's what I thought back then.

So I'd blow the speakers and keep putting bigger ones in, and pretty soon, you've got a Marshall. [*Laughs*] I learned over the years that louder is not always better. If you can, you want to keep the original speakers, transformers and all that good stuff without tampering with it.

Q: Regarding not needing to play loud, what was the moment of clarity?

It didn't really happen for me until maybe 2019, after my ears were blown, and there was a constant ringing in my head. [*Laughs*] I had blown a speaker out, opened the back of the cabinet and said, "Well, this is why I played so loud. I'm always testing new speakers to try and get a sound, and I'm always turning it up louder." I had a revelation that it doesn't need to be that loud. It took me a while to realize that I only need to focus on plugging into the amp and getting a good — rather than a loud — sound.

Q: If you do divert from the Bassman, what's your go-to?

I have this little Supro Thunderbolt [*S6420*], and I've used it on several records. They have a sweet sound and not as much gain. With the Bassman, you need a lot of volume coming out because it goes back into the hollowbody guitar so that you can play with sustain and feedback. It's amazing, but you don't get that with a solidbody. The Supro doesn't have quite that level of overhead, but they're darn close.

Q: How do you reconcile your love for rockabilly and swing while writing new music?

I reconcile it in that I play it the same way on guitar. There's no difference to me. If I play a chord or solo, I hear a saxophone horn section in my mind. That's just how my ear deciphers things. So if I come up with the solo, I see it as an idea for a horn section. It's the same process. And in doing that, I play them the same way. I don't omit anything or lean in any different way.

Q: What's the line of demarcation between the player you are today vs. your younger years?

I listen back to myself and how I played in the early days, and man, there was some pretty good stuff. A lot of times, I'm like, "Oh, wow, what did I do there?" So I can't say I've gotten better in any way because rock 'n' roll is about energy and what you're putting out there. Some of that stuff from the early days is pretty hard to beat.

Q: The way you connect the chords and phrases seems to have advanced...

A familiar sight — Setzer with a Gretsch 6120

People often ask me, "What are you doing between the chords as you go from A to Z?" The best I can say is what I hear in my head with chord substitutions — and the in-between stuff — is that it's something you have to hear. I don't think that's something you can learn or that anyone tells you about. You have to hear it yourself. I often explain that to people, like a lightbulb goes off. It's like, "Oh, why wouldn't you play the B♭ diminished before the D?" To use a baseball analogy, it's like how you have to anticipate a curveball in the count before the pitcher throws his two-seam fastball.

Q: Still, unlocking the fretboard is difficult for people. What was the key for you?

Oh, no, it totally is. I don't know that there's anyone who teaches guitar that doesn't speak about that — because it is hard. But what unlocks it for me is just listening to literally everything. There is not one type of music that I exclusively listen to. What I listen to at any given time can range from roots music, jazz, country, swing, rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, blues and anything else. But that's the main stuff; it's a deep well.

Q: How do you continue to stay inspired?

That's the magic of this; that's what keeps me coming back. I still feel like I have to make new magic. I don't want to keep holding the same microphone the same way all the time. I don't stop at the amp and put it on the same volume each time, and I don't put an egg on a piece of toast the same way each morning. Nothing new that I do will sound exactly the same way; it's a new piece of magic. And even if I'm happy with it, it just won't happen that same way again... It doesn't work that way — but I'm okay with that.

TONY NELSON/FUTURE

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ALL RHOADS LEAD TO QUIET RIOT

"In a way, Randy Rhoads indirectly got me the gig. Apparently, Randy was the one who told Kevin DuBrow, 'You should check out this guy Carlos Cavazo. A lot of my students are talking about him and saying he's really good. Give him a call for Quiet Riot'"

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES (RHOADS)

CARLOS CAVAZO

GW catches up with the guitarist who replaced Randy Rhoads in Quiet Riot, enjoyed massive success with *Metal Health* and shared the stage with Warren DeMartini in Ratt

By Andrew Daly

AS ONE OF the early comers to the buzzing hair metal scene, Carlos Cavazo assumed the role of lead guitarist for a reformed Quiet Riot, setting off a chain reaction of glammed-out excess.

Stepping out of the shadow of Randy Rhoads and into the spotlight, Cavazo — like many of his contemporaries would do later — infused classical and flamenco touches to Quiet Riot's mix. The result was a torrent of madness on the backside of Quiet Riot's 1983 smash success, *Metal Health*, skyrocketing the unassuming six-stringer.

"A lot of people ask me if I had any idea that *Metal Health* would be as big as it was," Cavazo says. "People assume I knew we had this winner on our hands, but honestly, I didn't. I'm still somewhat shocked that people love it."

There's no denying that Quiet Riot laid the blueprint for Eighties glam excess, and Cavazo agrees. "I've heard people say that we kicked it off, and yeah, we probably did. We were there initially and played a huge role. But there were some other bands before us, like Van Halen and Def Leppard. Still, I think Quiet Riot pushed it over the edge," Cavazo says. "I didn't think of it back then; we were just doing what we normally would, but looking back, I would agree."

Quiet Riot's post-Rhoads era got off to a hot start, but dysfunction undermined them. By the time the Nineties rolled around, Cavazo had departed for a spot alongside Warren DeMartini in Ratt.

"I loved sharing space with Warren," Cavazo says. "Our styles worked well together, and our songwriting and influences were similar. I'm probably more of a speedy player, while Warren is a more methodical, thought-out kind of guy. Those differing styles gave us fresh textures."

Things with Ratt fell apart, too. But Cavazo is at peace, having left the dysfunction behind. After laying low for years, Cavazo joined King Kobra and recorded an album in 2023's *We Are Warriors*. Things are calmer now, the expectations are lower and the pressures of personality disorders are in the past. But considering his hired-gun status, one wonders if Cavazo will stick around.

"I think so," he says. "I'd keep working with King Kobra. The biggest thing is their egos aren't out of control. They're not 'problem' people, and they don't make life harder. That goes a long way. But it depends on how well accepted we are. King Kobra have been around for a long time, but this is a new lineup. You never know how people will react."

What sparked your interest in the guitar?

Two words: the Beatles. When they

"I JUST LOVED THE MUSIC THE BEATLES WERE PLAYING, WHAT THEY DID AND ALL THE

came out with [*1964's*] *A Hard Day's Night*, my dad got me and my brother that record. I was only eight. We were really knocked out by it. I just loved the music they were playing, what they did and all the adventures they seemed to have. I knew I wanted to do that, somehow, some way. The Beatles are what led me to where I am now.

How did Snow, your pre-Quiet Riot band, get together?

Snow formed around 1976. It went through a bunch of lineups, and several members filtered out before we ended up with Doug Ellison on vocals and Stephen Quadros on drums, along with my brother Tony and me. By 1977, we had that lineup set, and that's when we started playing around the Hollywood scene and making a name for ourselves. Then, around 1978, we started playing original music, which was the first time I was involved in something like that. Before that, we mostly played covers, so writing my own music was an education. We achieved some pretty good success in the L.A. area and were happy with that when it ended. We didn't get a record deal, but we did manage to do a self-titled EP, which we were proud of.

What were your main takeaways from that experience?

Honestly, with the EP, I probably evolved more as a writer. The original version of "Metal Health" was on that Snow EP, but it was called "No More Booze." Me and my brother originally wrote the song, and later on, when I was in Quiet Riot, Kevin [*DuBrow*] loved it when he heard it, leading to us redoing it on *Metal Health*. The music, lyrics and melodies were changed, but the roots of it came from the Snow EP. So, if anything, I became a better songwriter through being part of Snow. I learned a lot about the business side of things, how things worked and what it took to make it on the L.A. club scene.

What led you to join a reformed Quiet Riot?

Snow had just broken up, and we were moving all our shit out of our house, trying to figure out what to do. As that was happening, out of nowhere, I got a call from Kevin, and he said, "Hey, man, we're looking for a new guitar player for Quiet Riot. Would you be interested?" I thought about it for a second and said, "Sure. I can come down and see about it." I went down, met the guys and rehearsed six or seven songs, eventually morphing into tracks appearing on *Metal Health*. The chemistry was cool immediately, and things between us were great early on. Things changed, but in those early days, everything was great.

Quiet Riot's Kevin DuBrow [*left*] and Carlos Cavazo perform in Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 27, 1984

Did you feel pressure to match what Randy Rhoads had done?

I was definitely comfortable doing what I did best. People have to remember that at the time, Randy's work with Quiet Riot was pretty unknown. As far as I was concerned, I only knew Randy as the guitar player for Ozzy [*Osbourne*]. So I never felt any pressure to be or play like Randy; I felt comfortable doing what I had been doing on the club scene with Snow. It seemed to work, and I think my not being influenced by Randy was good for the band and the record. But you know, in a way, Randy indirectly got me the gig; apparently, Randy was the one who told Kevin, "Hey, you should check out this guy Carlos. A lot of my students are talking about him and saying he's really good. Give him a call for Quiet Riot." Kevin got a hold of me through that grapevine. Thanks, Randy!

What are your memories of putting *Metal Health* together?

I remember working on a lot of different stuff early on. We had a lot of material; it took time to get it all together and make it what it is now. Before the album came out in '83, we recorded a lot of stuff. We had a lot of battles with Spencer Proffer, the producer, about the album's direction. He's the one who wanted us to record [*Slade's*] "Cum on Feel the Noize" because he thought Kevin had a similar voice to Noddy Holder. That song became a big hit, but we were very against it early on. We didn't want any cover tunes on *Metal Health*, so that was a huge battle. But Spencer's idea was obviously a good one, considering it became such a big hit. Who knows what the record would have done without that song in the charts?

How about the solo for "Metal Health"?

After we reworked the Snow song, "No More Booze," and the lyrics and melodies worked out, I tackled the solo. I used Marshall amps and a combination of Jackson, Charvel and Gibson guitars. I think I used my Flying V for most of it. I probably wasn't the greatest guitar player back then. I was comfortable playing live, but being good in the studio is a whole different game than being good live. Now I had to try and do what I was used to doing on stage in a studio, which was hard because there was no crowd to inspire me. It took a lot of takes, but I did the best I could with it. As a guitar player, I feel you need a good producer to help get the best out of you, which Spencer did with me. It wasn't one inspired moment but a lot of hard work and collaboration with Spencer.

Why did Quiet Riot falter after *Metal Health*?

That was the high point, and it was a lot of pressure to keep up with *Metal Health*. But I don't think it was the band's fault; our producers and record label always tried to push us in certain directions that didn't make sense. For instance, the *QR III* record [*1986*] had many songs that weren't metal at all. We should have stuck to our guns and stayed true to what we were about. If we had, we could have come up with way better songs than what ended up on that album. And it wasn't for lack of trying; we'd submit songs, and they'd say, "No, we don't like those. Go back to the drawing board and write some more." They were always trying to push us into a more radio-friendly space, and that was never the type of band Quiet Riot was.

Was it challenging to stay relevant?

Oh, it definitely was. There was such a groundswell of incredible players, and you had to always stay on top of things. The good thing was that I read music, so I was constantly learning licks from books. I liked to read music and always wanted to improve my playing. I play classical, flamenco, Spanish guitar and stuff like that, adding a new flavor. It was a time when you had to constantly try to improve yourself. At the same time, you had to keep your song-

ADVENTURES THEY SEEMED TO HAVE. I KNEW I WANTED TO DO THAT, SOMEHOW, SOME WAY"

writing good, too, because a lot of it is songwriting. The truth is you can be a poor guitar player but a great songwriter, make great money and have a great career. You could also be a great guitar player without a career because you can't write songs. I found that the important thing was to find a balance between both. I worked to be a great guitar player and songwriter, which is very hard.

Did Interjecting classical and flamenco touches help?

I hoped it would set me apart from a lot of people. But I think a lot of the guys from that era, like Randy Rhoads, Yngwie Malmsteen and even Eddie Van Halen, were classically trained to some degree. That style of music started to wash over the entire era in the Eighties; it was everywhere. Still, I always tried to interject classical and Spanish-flavored things into my playing whenever possible. I'd go with it if I felt it fit well with the song. It had to fit the mood, but some songs lend themselves to that, which is good because I was so influenced by them.

Did being labeled a "shredder" bother you?

No, because I feel any label can be a good thing. The way I look at it is if they're acknowledging you, you must be doing something noteworthy. But I couldn't control any of that; I just tried to focus on improving. I had good and bad points and worked to highlight the good ones and fix the bad ones. Plus, if you were a good shredder, it was a good idea to go for it and shred; it could be what got you a career. As a guitar player, you must focus on doing what you're good at and highlighting that. So if someone wanted to give the label of "shredder" or "melodic guitar player," that's not something that ever bothered me. I'd happily accept it.

Do you have any regrets from your time with Quiet Riot?

Just the way the band basically fell apart. We were up there with Def Leppard, Mötley Crüe and Bon Jovi, but we dropped off the face of the earth because of certain behaviors by certain members of the band, leading to our demise. I wish there was "celebrity control" back then to help people with bad behavior problems. I don't want to mention any names or specific people; I think everyone knows who I'm talking about.

Was Quiet Riot a case of missed opportunity?

That band was definitely a missed opportunity. We could have done much more, like, way more, and it's unfortunate. I was one of the primary songwriters in Quiet Riot, and it got to the point where I didn't want to bring my best ideas to the table anymore because any idea I brought into the band would be ripped apart and end up being something I never intended it to be. I started holding back my best songs and saving them.

What ended up happening was, when I joined Ratt, a lot of the songs I held back from Quiet Riot ended up being on Ratt's *Infestation* [*2010*]. I brought them to the guys in Ratt, and they didn't rip it apart at all; they loved my songs. It was great, like a whole different thing. At least, that's how it was at first. There are some personality problems in Ratt, but the ones in Quiet Riot were worse and screwed things up badly.

How did you end up in Ratt?

I got a call from Warren [*DeMartini*]; he left a message. I missed the call, and when I saw it was Warren, I was like, "Oh, what does he want? There must be some big party he wants to invite me to." But when I called him back, he told me Ratt was looking for another guitar player and was wondering if I'd want to come down and hang out with them. I went down, rehearsed and checked it out. Things felt good between us, and it ended up working out. I brought some songs, they had some songs, and we recorded *Infestation*. I liked working with those guys, and honestly, it was more fun playing with Ratt than playing with Quiet Riot. I know the guys in Ratt have their set of problems, but they have a whole different set of problems from Quiet Riot.

So why join Ratt if they also were dysfunctional?

CHELSEA LAUREN/GETTY IMAGES (CARLOS) PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES (BAND)

"THERE'S TOO MUCH WATER UNDER THAT BRIDGE. I GOT ALONG WITH THE GUYS, BUT...

Yes, they were and are dysfunctional, and I'm sure Ratt will never happen again because of everything that has gone on. There's too much water under that bridge, and I guess too many bad things happened. But you know, Ratt's dysfunction isn't so much about ego; it's more business-related. Whereas Quiet Riot is all ego-driven stuff. There was a lot of one-upmanship, betrayal and dark stuff that happened within that bad. So in that way, Ratt is very different. They had their own differences with each other because they've been together longer, but I got along with each of the guys in Ratt. But without going into too much detail, things within Ratt were definitely weird.

What would you say was the final nail in the coffin?

When they decided to fire Warren for whatever reason. I'm sure it was about business, but that was not a great business move. Once Warren was fired, I didn't see myself being in Ratt anymore. I already went through situations in Quiet Riot where they were dumping people left and right, and I didn't want to deal with that again. I don't want to be in a band where the lineup is a revolving door. I wanted to be the way we were, but it got to the point where that was no longer possible. So, I didn't want to do it anymore, and I told them I was done.

[*top, from left*] Rudy Sarzo, Kevin DuBrow and Carlos Cavazo in action, January 14, 1984

[*bottom*] Cavazo on stage with Ratt in West Hollywood, April 20, 2010

How did you end up with King Kobra?

Carmine [*Appice*] called and asked me to record a song or two on the new record. I said, "Sure. Why not?" I guess they liked what I did because they asked me, "Can you just do the whole record?" Once again, I said, "Yeah, why not?" It's refreshing, and I like working with those guys. I've worked with Carmine before on past projects and with Paul [*Shortino*] many times over the years, too.

What guitars are you using these days?

I've been using Gibson a lot. I still use Jackson and Charvel but mainly Gibson Flying V's. I love them, and I've been recording with them for a long time. I still have the V that I got in the very early Eighties, and that's mainly what I used on the new King Kobra record. I love the sound of them and the way they play. I don't overthink it beyond that. They fit what I'm doing, and I like how they feel. They're great guitars.

Do you keep your pickups stock, or do you upgrade?

With the Gibson guitars, I leave the stock pickups in there. I think they're humbuckers in there these days. But with the Flying V that I got in the early Eighties, I put DiMarzio pickups in there. But their new ones sound so good that I don't feel I need to change them. So the Gibson pickups are great, but as far as the Jackson and Charvel guitars, I still put DiMarzios in those guitars.

And what combination of amps are you plugging into now?

I am all about traditional tube amps. I've been using Soldano amps for the last 10 or 15 years, and they're great. Aside from that, I like Marshalls because it's hard to get rental Soldano amps when you're on the road. I'd like to take them out or rent them, but they're pretty rare custom amps, so I don't always have that option. I usually go with Marshall JCM900s because they're the most readily available; they sound good and are super consistent in terms of what you'll get.

Does being lumped in with hair metal bother you?

No, I don't think it's derogatory. Back then, everybody went crazy with their hairstyles. It really is true that it was a competition to see who could have the biggest hairstyle. [*Laughs*] We really were hair metal bands, so no, it doesn't bother me. If anything, it's a funny term that maybe makes you giggle. If anything, I'm proud of my hair metal heritage. I'm glad I still have my hair! [*Laughs*] It's a memory of a certain time, and I guess that decade will never go away. People seem to love it, which is not bad for those of us who were there.

If Quiet Riot were to call out of the blue, do you think you would ever consider rejoining?

Oh, I don't know. I try not to think too much about it. I guess if they want to continue, then that's fine. One way to look at it is that the current lineup continuing only helps the brand and helps the name. But I don't see myself doing that anymore... I can't imagine doing it. I closed that chapter in my life and moved on. It was so long ago, and so much has happened. Going back seems out of the question for the most part. I jumped off that crazy train, and I don't know if I can get back on it.

Where do you go from here?

Truthfully, sometimes I don't even care about being in a band and touring anymore. At this point in my life, I'm sure I will probably be doing something with music, but exactly what that might be isn't clear. I don't mind recording records with people at this stage, but as far as heavy touring, I don't know if I could do that anymore. I guess it depends on who it's with.

Beyond that, I'm sure I'll make more music, play more Spanish and classical guitar, focus on making some interesting Latin music, and keep teaching guitar to my few students. It's a lot of work to go out there and fly around these days. I'm still passionate about guitar, but interested in winding down rather than ratcheting up. GW

WITHOUT GOING INTO TOO MUCH DETAIL, THINGS WITHIN RATT WERE DEFINITELY WEIRD"

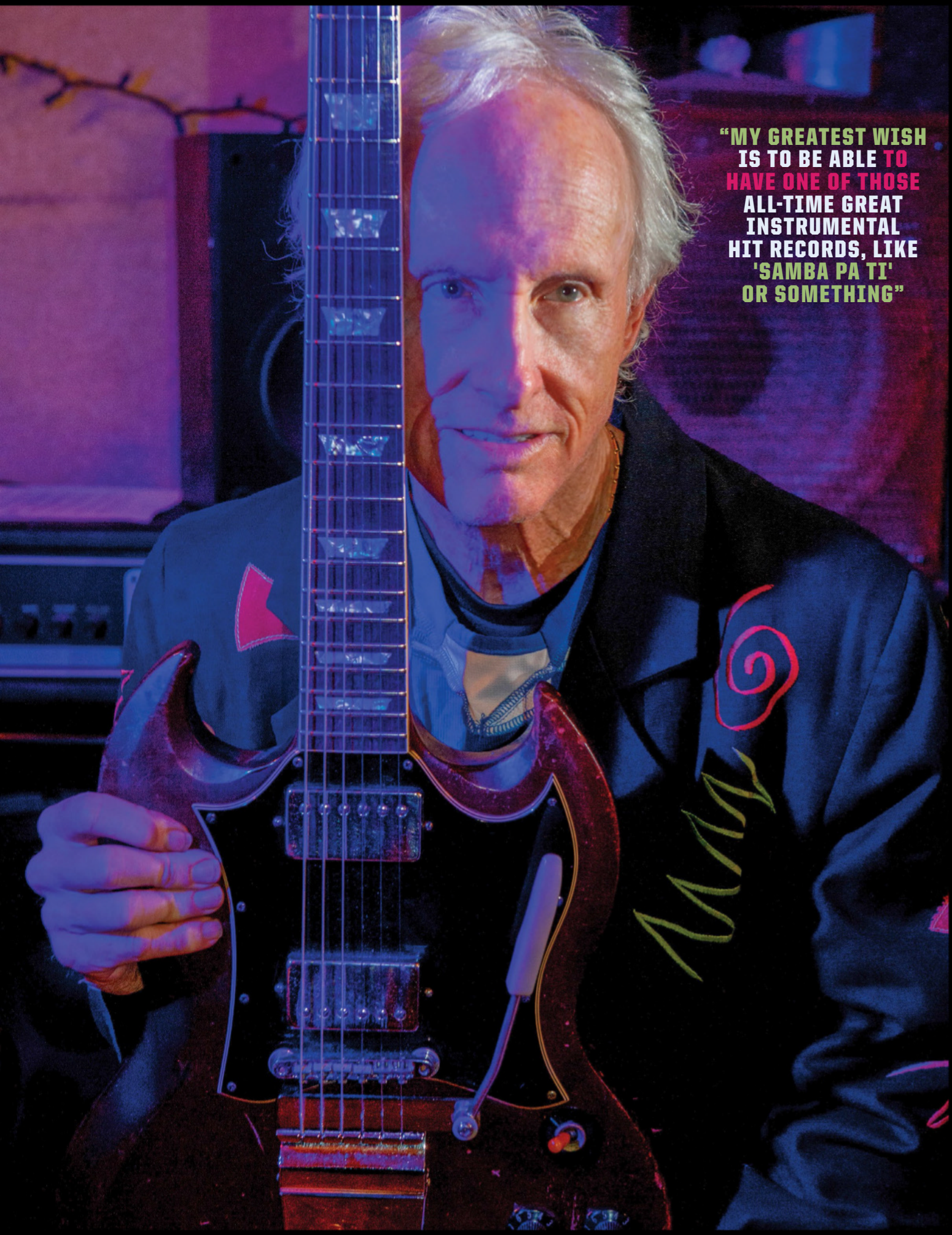
+SOUL+KITCHEN

ROBBY KRIEGER BREAKS DOWN THE SOUL SAVAGES' NEW ALBUM AND EXPLAINS HIS STRUGGLES TO COME UP WITH HIS OWN SOUND DURING HIS TIME WITH THE DOORS By Mark McStea Photos by Jill Jarrett

ROBBY KRIEGER'S LEGENDARY status is assured, having recorded six classic albums with the Doors between 1967 and 1971, starting with their eponymous debut and concluding with *L.A. Woman*, due to the untimely death of singer Jim Morrison. Krieger's unique finger-picked, slide stylings are all over the records, becoming as much a part of the band's signature sound as Ray Manzarek's keyboards. Krieger's writing was equally vital to the success of the band, coming up with many of their most loved songs. The Doors made two more albums, *Other Voices* (1971) and *Full Circle* (1972), after Morrison's death, working as a three-piece — both strong albums that are often overlooked due to the absence of the charismatic Morrison.

Krieger had two short-lived bands — Butts Band and Red Shift — through to the end of the Seventies before moving into the jazz-fusion arena in the Eighties with his self-titled album released in 1985. By 1991, he had formed his own touring band, the Robby Krieger Band. With interest in the Doors' catalog always strong, Krieger succumbed to the inevitable in 2002, hooking up with Manzarek to temporarily reform the band under the banner Doors of the 21st Century with Cult frontman Ian Astbury on vocals.

Krieger has continued to record intermittently, with *Cinematix* in 2000 and *Singularity* in 2010, but he remains a fairly constant fixture on the live circuit, both as a solo artist with his own band and as a special guest with numerous rock legends, including Gov't Mule and Alice In Chains. Krieger has just released his first album since 2020's *The Ritual Begins at Sundown*. *Shark Skin Suit,* the debut album for the newly formed Robby Krieger and the Soul Savages, sees Krieger returning to the all-instrumental, jazz-fusion vibe of his earliest solo work. The warm, organic feel of the record harks back to the golden age of fusion.


"MY GREATEST WISH IS TO BE ABLE TO HAVE ONE OF THOSE ALL-TIME GREAT INSTRUMENTAL HIT RECORDS, LIKE 'SAMBA PA TI' OR SOMETHING"

"My original SG was stolen," Krieger says. "I got another '67 years later that I still use. I don't know what I did with all the guitars I had"

"RIDERS ON THE STORM" STARTED OFF AS A SURF TUNE – THEN IT SOMEHOW MORPHED INTO WHAT IT BECAME"

How did the album come about?
I'd just gotten over a cancer scare, and a good friend of mine, Kevin Brandon, who'd played bass on *Singularity* in 2010, had just escaped near death. He'd been in bed for a year. He wanted to play, so we got together with another couple of friends, Dale Alexander on drums and Ed Roth on keyboards, and we started jamming for fun at my studio in Glendale, California. Pretty soon, Dale had to go back to Minneapolis, so we ended up with Franklin Vanderbilt on drums, who plays with Lenny Kravitz, and that became the group.

Had you written anything beforehand, or was everything created in the studio?
We went into the recording process without any set ideas. I find that to be the most fun way to do it. Even way back with the Doors, when we recorded *L.A. Woman*, that's how we did that record. We'd just start playing in our rehearsal space and the songs would come out somehow. We have a pretty cool setup in my studio, including some great state-of-the-art plug-ins combined with some really good old-school equipment. The idea was to try to keep the process and the sound as old-school as possible. We mainly played live together as we recorded it.

There's a cinematic feel to a lot of the tracks. A lot of them sound like they could have come from Seventies detective shows.
You're right, a lot of the stuff did sound like it could've been from soundtracks, but we didn't think, as we were creating the album, "Hey, let's make it like a TV show or something." It just seemed to come out that way. I'd definitely like someone to pick up the tracks for something like that. [*Laughs*] "A Day in L.A." sounded to us like it could have come from a cool comedy score.

There are great guitar tones all over the album. What are the main guitars and amps we're hearing?
Pretty much my '67 Gibson SG with a 4x10 Fender Blues DeVille. There's also a bit of electric sitar on a couple of tracks. Most of the delays were added after I'd laid down the guitar tracks. I prefer to record with a fairly straightforward sound and then, if

I want to add something, that's an option. But I'm not stuck with one particular effect in case I change my mind later on.

The album feels like a throwback to the golden age of jazz fusion, with a good chunk of funk in the mix. What sort of stuff influenced you?
I like all kinds of music, but for this album, Kevin Brandon had played with Aretha Franklin for years, and the other guys had played with a lot of great jazz and blues artists. I think that's probably a large part of what drove the overall feel of the record.

The trademark of the great albums from that era is that all the musicians had great chops.
Exactly, and that's what was so great working with the guys on this record, the way they can push you to another level because they're all at the very top of their game.

The record has a bright, summery feel, which is ironic as it came out in January!
I never actually thought about that — that's funny. Maybe if it takes a while for the album to catch on, it'll be just in time for the summer. [*Laughs*]

You come up with a lot of strong melodies, some which could be vocal lines. Do you ever think in terms of vocals when you're coming up with melodic ideas?
Mostly, the melodies come to me without any notion of words in mind. If I do come up with lyrics, it would be later — that's the way I always did it with the Doors. My greatest wish is to be able to have one of those all-time great instrumental hit records, like [*Santana's*] "Samba Pa Ti" or something.

In terms of the production of the album, there's a lot of space around the instruments. What's the secret to that?
You're right about that, and it's not easy to do as these days everybody wants to fill every space. I call it "dentist's syndrome" — the need to fill every hole. [*Laughs*] These guys are all seasoned pros, and they know when to play and when to lay back, and I think, if there is a secret, it's the ability to know when to let the music breathe. There's a real art to that, so I'm glad you noticed that.

Your slide playing is unusual in that you tend to avoid the traditional blues clichés in favor of a more fluid, microtonal approach.
Yeah, ever since the Doors' "Moonlight Drive." I don't think anybody would have thought of doing the slide part like that. I always wanted to have my own sound. I do think my slide playing is kind of different, even though I can't help being influenced by Duane Allman and some of the greats of slide. I think slide playing is the ultimate way to express what you want to play, as you're not bound by the frets. Hopefully, if you don't mess it up [*Laughs*], if you're careful, you can really find some interesting, expressive nuances.

"Ricochet Rabbit" goes down the Wes Montgomery route of voicing the melody in octaves.
You can't really play octaves without people thinking of Wes or George Benson. That's actually one of my favorite tracks on the album. I was just fooling around with the part and one of the guys said it sounded like something we can work with. The slide solo takes it to another place, though, which I think is cool.

"Blue Brandino" finds quite a different approach to the rest of the record, with a grittier, hard-edged blues sound to your guitar. Have you ever thought about a straight blues album?
I wouldn't mind trying something like that. I love blues, but I think it's hard to come up with something a little different when you're restricted to playing blues.

What are the standout records when you look back over your playing with the Doors?
Definitely the first, self-titled album [*from 1967*], as we'd had months and months of playing the stuff every night at the Whiskey. I think *L.A. Woman* is probably my next favorite, mostly because of the way we recorded it, as I say, as we were jamming on a lot of the tracks until they became songs. "Riders on the Storm" started off as a surf tune — then it somehow morphed into what it became. After Jim passed, we did a couple of albums with John, Ray and me. I think there were some great songs on those albums, although they don't get a lot of attention.

Do you ever listen to the Doors' albums?
No, not really, unless I'm planning to include a song in one of my live shows that I haven't played for many years. I hear a lot of our stuff on the radio all the time anyway. I think the songs still hold up pretty good. What makes me say that is when I look at the people who come to my live shows and you've got original fans, plus a big percentage of younger people who've also discovered the band. They really seem to be into what the Doors did.

What do you think of your own playing from back then? Do you wish you'd done things differently?
No, I don't do that. In fact, I think it's actually probably more the other way around, where I'll think, 'Wow, how did I do that?" [*Laughs*] I never actually sit down and practice as such these days, unless I've got some shows coming up, when I will maybe do that to a degree. [*Laughs*] I think I always learn more new stuff when I'm playing gigs. It seems that the pressure to create in the moment can be very inspirational.

Do you still have many guitars from the Sixties?
No, very few. I have about 30 guitars, but only one is from when I was in the Doors, and that's my '54 Les Paul Black Beauty, which I used on the first couple of albums. My original SG was stolen. I got another '67 years later that I still use. I don't know what I did with all the guitars I had. They weren't collectable in those days, so I sold them or gave them away or whatever. I wish I hadn't. [*Laughs*]

What keeps everything fresh and stimulating for you after 60 years of playing and touring?
In some ways it's more exciting, because in those days I was more in the background. Jim was out front, and John, Ray and I were in the background, in the shadows. Nowadays, it's the Robby Krieger Band, and I'm expected to talk to the audience and all that stuff, which is fun, but I kind of wish I was still hidden away. [*Laughs*]

What's coming up for you?
I've got another album recorded and ready to go, I'm just looking for a label. It's an instrumental reggae album. Phil Chen was a good friend of mine; he played bass in the Butts Band, which I formed with Ray Manzarek and John Densmore in 1973. We recorded our first, self-titled album in Jamaica, which thrilled Phil, as he got a chance to see a lot of his family members who lived there. He was a great bass player, playing with Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart and other artists. He became very ill and passed away at the end of 2021. Before he passed, we had discussed and recorded an album of instrumental reggae tracks. I'm looking for a label to release the record toward the end of summer, so that will be my focus once the promotion of the current album finishes. GW

THE MAN OF THE HOUR

Sicilian guitar prodigy **MATTEO MANCUSO** discusses the fingerstyle techniques, arpeggios and tones that have made him one of the most exciting names in modern guitar

BY AMIT SHARMA /// PHOTOS BY PAOLO TERLIZZI

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He's won the admiration of masters like Al Di Meola, Joe Bonamassa and Tosin Abasi, and Steve Vai has declared the future of guitar to be safe as long as people like Mancuso Mancuso are around to keep the evolutionary wheels turning

NO ONE HAS lit up the guitar community — excluding Nuno Bettencourt with his breathtaking "Rise" guitar solo last year — quite like Matteo Mancuso. The 27-year-old Sicilian released his first album, *The Journey,* last summer and would be the first to admit his life has become a bit of a blur ever since, from the onslaught of tutorial videos dissecting his fingerstyle method to ending up as the most talked about musician at this year's NAMM Show.

And although it's his technique that will undoubtedly be responsible for forging a lot of those unforgettable first impressions, hitting the same speeds Paul Gilbert and Al Di Meola are known for using just his fingers, it's the sheer sense of musicality that makes his debut full-length such an electrifying listen from beginning to end. There are moments of unbelievable virtuosity that nod to jazz fusion masterminds like Guthrie Govan and Greg Howe packed alongside the melodic grace one might associate with Eric Johnson and the avant-garde tension typified by Pat Metheny. In that sense, the Palermo-born Yamaha endorsee is very much the full package. And this is just the start of his journey.

Like many rock players, it was the era-defining works of Jimi Hendrix, Ritchie Blackmore and Jimmy Page that first caught Mancuso's ear. His classical techniques, however, were inherited serendipitously — the result of growing up around a musician father who'd often play nylon-string acoustics at home.

BASTA BAR

"I started out on electric because I actually wasn't too interested in classical," the rising star says with a nervous laugh. "But when I was young I always saw my dad playing classical acoustic. I ended up with a strange combination — playing electric but with my fingers, because I thought that's how you're supposed to play. When I started, I wasn't really into jazz. My father helped me more like a listener than a teacher. His job was to drag me back in time and go back to the source material. Django Reinhardt ended up becoming one of my favorite players, and I soon discovered that a lot of modern rock players were borrowing ideas from jazz traditions. Everything was connected, in a way, which is how I ended up blending those influences into my own style."

What were the defining qualities in Reinhardt's playing that inspired you?
It wasn't so much about the scales. It was the sense of storytelling to his solos. That's what I got out of it. He could take small pieces of information and make them beautiful, you know? If you analyze his solos, there's not really a lot of scales or chords. His leads are usually very simple, with some arpeggios. There's nothing fancy going on, but he had this tone and touch. There was a control he had over the melodic information that he chose to share. That's actually the most difficult thing to learn in terms of improvising. His melodies were very effective and very simple. Just listen to "All of Me" or "Minor Swing." They're not harmonically rich. Another player with the same gift was Wes Montgomery. He could improvise and make it sound like the part was pre-written. That's why they're some of the best players ever, at least for me.

You were only 16 when you uploaded your first video to YouTube, a fingerstyle cover of Racer X's "Technical Difficulties" played on a Gibson SG.
I'm still not satisfied with how it came out. The sound was bad and the playing wasn't that good. But at the time I was in a competitive mode. I wanted to learn other people's things and demonstrate that I was able to do it. "Technical Difficulties" felt like a big challenge, especially using just my fingers.

Then you started dabbling in the relentless rhythms of country rock, taking on Brent Mason's "Pick It Apart" and Guthrie Govan's "Rhode Island Shred." Again, pieces that are not for the faint of heart.
It was just a matter of time in terms of speed. I still practice a lot these days. The goal for me was not to play fast, but to play as *accurately* as possible. I wanted everything to sound clean rather than fast from the very start. The country stuff wasn't as hard to learn for me because those players use a lot of hybrid picking, which is similar to my fingerstyle approach. Some licks felt familiar just because of that chicken picking technique. People like Brent Mason and Johnny Hiland are incredible at that. And like the gypsy jazz stuff, I wanted to absorb the *vocabulary* rather than just absorb the technique. If you understand the vocabulary you can improvise better. I learned a lot of solos to get there. A perfect example of a player who can do everything is Guthrie Govan. He's so versatile, and it was actually him who turned me on to that approach. After him, I learned about Brent, Johnny and the other country pickers.

You also covered Pat Metheny's "Have You Heard," which feels closer to your own style. What did you pick up from him?
Pat is one of my favorite composers. Anytime I'm composing with a classical guitar, he's a really big influence — maybe too much! He's an incredible player. I think he peaked with the Pat Metheny Group; those are some of his most memorable tunes. *Still Life (Talking)* [*1987*], for example, is one of my favorite albums of all time. When I first started working on jazz phrasing, there were a lot of chromatic passages that I stole from Pat, particularly the song "Have You Heard." I got a lot from that one tune! I also love his clean tone; it's very mellow.

You utilize two fingerstyle positions: appoggiato, where the picking hand is supported, and tocco libero, where it is not.
When I'm trying to do something like "Technical Difficulties," basically three-notes-per-string Eighties shred stuff, I tend to play more with the appoggiato technique, where the thumb is supported on the string and three fingers pick each note independently. It's a mix of flamenco and bass techniques, because bass players use the same kind of position. Anything that's more scale-oriented, including pentatonic stuff, will be played that way. For arpeggios, tocco libero is more like the classical technique, with my wrist in line, which means my thumb is available. I never use my pinky, actually, so I only have nails on three fingers and the thumb. And the three nails on my fingers aren't real; I use a product called gel nails. You put them on your real nails and they're actually way stronger. My thumbnail is real, mainly because I don't use it as much as the three fingers.

"The goal for me was not to play fast, but to play as accurately as possible. I wanted everything to sound clean rather than fast from the very start"

"Silk Road" is one of the more well-known tracks from your record. Interestingly, you chose to use a Yamaha Pacifica on that one.
The Pacifica is the best Strat you can buy at that price in terms of quality. I think they sound great. And now they have the Professional models, which are supposed to be very good, though I haven't actually tried one yet. For the second album, I'd like to do more songs like that, with the whammy bar. Of course, Jeff Beck is a huge influence whenever I'm using the bar. Nobody can sound like him; it's impossible. There was only one Jeff Beck, and there will only ever be one.

"Samba Party" is less moody and more of a major-key fusion jam.
That's actually one of my favorite tracks. I wanted to write a happy major song, with a lot of those chords. It's one of the brightest songs on the album. Some of the lines in the solo were stolen from Greg Howe, particularly the tapping stuff. It doesn't actually have anything to do with samba, funnily enough, except for the theme. But it sounded like a fun name to me. I can't really label that song; it's not rock, fusion or jazz.

Matteo Mancuso with his Yamaha Revstar Custom. "It's my go-to guitar for everything. It sounds amazing and is very reliable," he says

You tend to use simpler melodies over complex chord progressions, like on "Falcon Flight," or more complex lines over more straightforward progressions. It's all about balance, right?
That's how I think about all composition in general. You need to have balance. Complex chords call for simple melodies. And then with the simpler movements, you can experiment more with intricate melodic ideas. I used my dad's old Roland VG88 on that song for the sitar parts. I really like that sound and wanted to do an intro with a fade-out. It's the shortest song on the album, so I wanted to do something special.

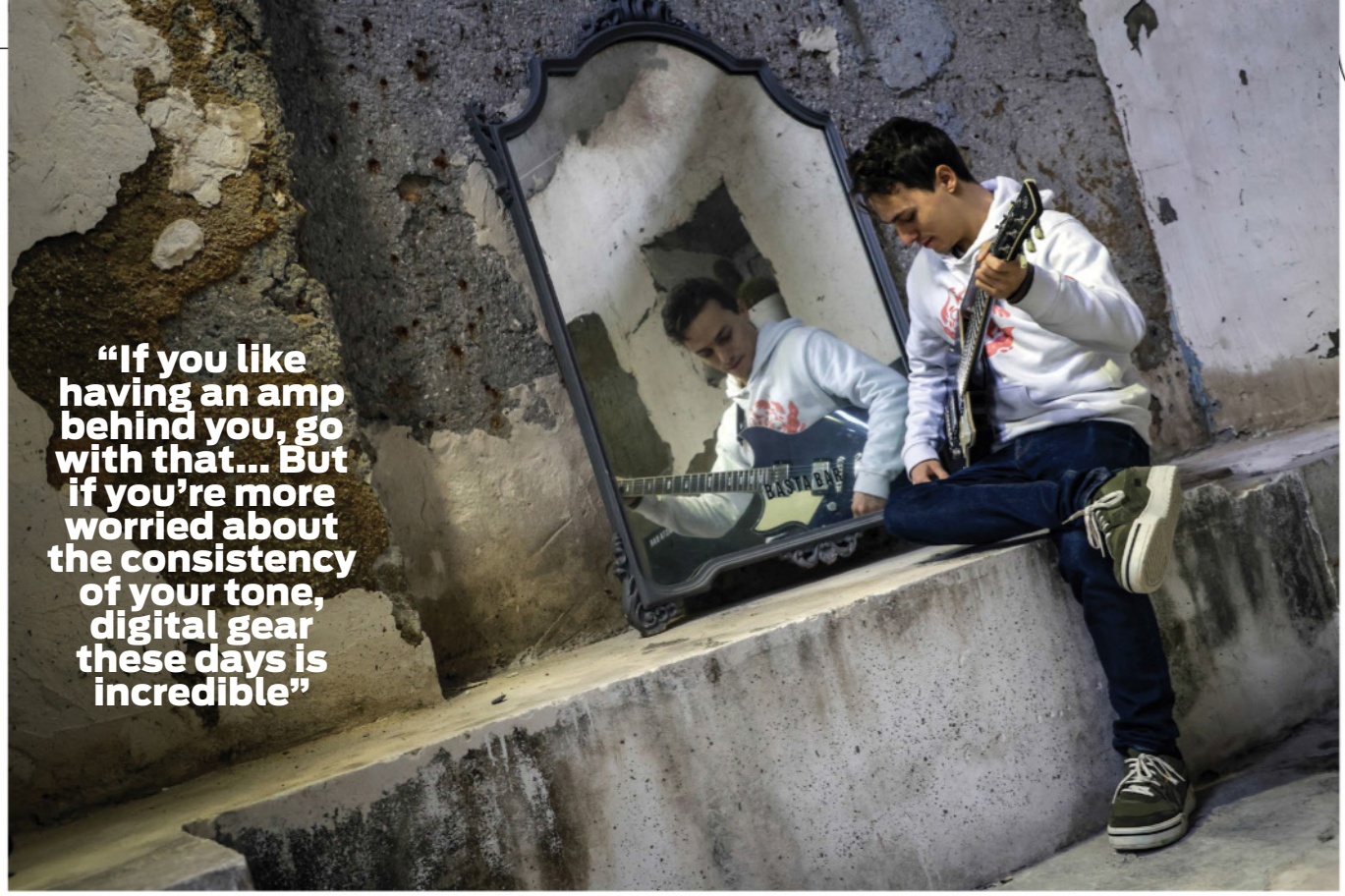
How much do you think about theory when improvising or composing solos?
When I visualize the notes on the fretboard, I prefer to focus on the chords rather than the scales. A good way to look at it is to harmonize your scales. Take a major scale, for example. I like to have all seven modes available and divide the neck into seven different positions. If I'm playing in A minor, I can think about E minor or C major. I try to think about all the degrees of the scale, of the key. If I want to go outside, I will think about another scale in that key. On "Silk Road," I was thinking of Phrygian dominant in F♯ or the diminished scale. I like the half-whole iteration of that scale in particular. Sometimes I use a bit of melodic minor as well. But it all gets related to a chord; that's very important for me.

What would you say is the most difficult to play lick on the record?
I'd have to listen to it again! I think there's a part of "Silk Road" that's really challenging. There are crazy licks everywhere, to be honest. The "Blues for John" solo wasn't easy. I wrote that song in tribute to John McLaughlin after falling in love with his work in Mahavishnu Orchestra and on the *Friday Night in San Francisco* album with Al Di Meola and Paco De Lucía. I wanted to outline the changes but also rock out. When you're shredding, you tend to do it in one scale, but on a song like that, the chords are changing so you have to keep an eye on them. It was quite tricky, but it's also a bluesy song, so there are a lot of those Joe Bonamassa and Eric Johnson-style ideas. "Polifemo" is difficult as well, especially live because it really needs another instrument like a piano to do the chords. I think it's one of the songs that suffers from the trio setup of my band — it brings a lot of freedom, but songs like that need a harmonic background that you can't quite get with a trio.

You recorded most of the album with a Yamaha Revstar Custom fitted with Lollar Imperial humbuckers. What is it about that guitar and those pickups that speak to you?
It's my go-to guitar for *everything*. It sounds amazing and is very reliable. That's what I brought with me for my first American tour. To be honest, the Lollar pickups were already fitted. I'm not much of a nerd when it comes to pickups. I just liked the sound and didn't need to change them. But there was a set I tried at NAMM that I ended up loving — the PAF 59s by DiMarzio. I thought they sounded incredibly good. I don't want much output on my neck pickup because I only use it for clean sounds. I don't use it for distorted tones because it's too muddy and dark; I just use the bridge for overdriven sounds. That DiMarzio seemed to really do the job. It's a pickup I'm really interested in.

You used your dad's old sunburst Strat on some of the rhythm parts. What can you tell us about it?
I think it's just a standard American Strat that my father bought in the Seventies, but the guitar itself was made in the Sixties. I think the year is 1968, so it's a very old guitar. I really like the second and fourth positions on the pickup selector for rhythm parts. I have tons of guitars at home, and most of them are from my father.

I use the Revstar and Pacifica most of the time — and there's also a Ramirez classical guitar. But there's plenty of other things to choose from. There's a goldtop Les Paul Deluxe with mini humbuckers and a Black Beauty that now has yellow binding from years of aging. Both are from the Seventies. I find Les Pauls too heavy; they're not comfortable to play! I just stick with the Yamaha models because of the sound and the relationship I have with them. There are no restrictions with other guitars; it's not like I've been told I can't use Fenders or Gibsons, but I think it's better behavior for me to stick with Yamahas for my videos.



You swear by digital gear live and in the studio, mainly trusting in your Line 6 Helix. Does it all boil down to reliability?
Yeah! Digital amp modeling is *so* much more reliable. I’m a lazy guy; I don’t want to use tube amps. Of course, sometimes they can sound incredibly good and way better than the simulations. But the advantage of digital is that you can combine different things, like two amps — or all these extra effects — without problems. That’s why I like to have an all-in-one pedalboard that covers all my sounds. The tone is exactly the same for every gig. You can’t do that with a real amp, especially if you are renting them — you have no idea what you might find and what condition it will be in. That’s a big issue for me. I think the main difference between analog and digital isn’t the sound — sometimes I can’t really tell the difference — but rather the *experience* on stage.

If you like having an amp behind you, go with that. For some players that’s important. Digital amps can’t replace that feeling. But if you’re more worried about the consistency of your tone, digital gear these days is incredible.

Could that change? Say in five years time, you’re playing bigger venues and starting to experience more high-end touring with the personnel to take care of everything... Will we ever see you switch to a multiple-amp rig like Eric Johnson or Joe Bonamassa?
I don’t know, to be honest, because I’m so comfortable with what I have now. I’m the kind of person who sticks with what feels easiest and most comfortable. And you have to remember digital amps will continue to get better and better. The only way it might change is if I find an amp that cannot be replicated at all through digital technology. That would be the point where it could all change, but it hasn’t happened yet.

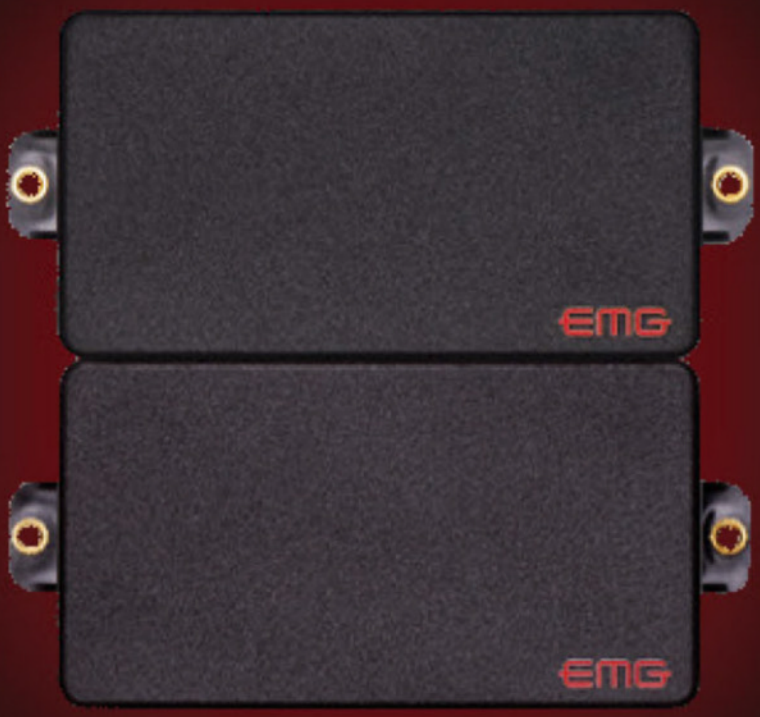
You clearly have a very strong knowledge of arpeggios across the fretboard. Which ones do you find yourself using the most?
Most of them aren’t particularly strange, they’re just the common ones we all use. But I have a few tricks to sound unique. If we’re in A minor, instead of playing an A minor 7 arpeggio (A, C, E, G), I’ll play a C major 7 arpeggio (C, E, G, B) starting on an A note. That would be the 5th and 8th frets on the low E string, the 7th fret on the A string, the 5th and 9th frets on the D and G strings, then the 8th fret on the B and 7th on the high E. So it’s more like A minor 9, which is a sound I really like. That’s a good trick. I find it more interesting than the usual minor and major arpeggios. Another trick I use a lot is the pentatonic scale but with some 5th intervals removed.

If you’re in E minor, it would be something like the 7th and 10th frets on the A string, the 7th on the D, the 7th and 9th on the G, the 10th on the B and then the 7th and 12th frets on the high E. I’ll play lines like that in various positions across the neck. It has a different flavor compared to regular pentatonic ideas.

Legato lines can often feel very loose and free, but a lot of your ideas have a strong rhythmic backbone, similar to British fusion guitarist Tom Quayle.
It’s been quite difficult to achieve that. I’ve worked hard on my left hand because I believe it to be more important than my right. It’s responsible for the tone, bending, vibrato and more. If you have a bad left-hand technique, you won’t sound that good. I like to keep my left hand relaxed and use a lot of legato. I actually don’t like the sound of everything picked, at least in most situations. On acoustic, however, there isn’t sustain like an electric guitar. That’s probably when I’d choose to fingerpick every note. Using distortion on an electric means I can use a lot more legato. I love players like Allan Holdsworth and Tom Quayle, who are very legato-led.

What can we expect from album number two?
I will use my Pacifica more on the next album. I love the single-coil sound and the whammy bar. It will probably be less jazz-oriented and more like free composition. I love Pat Metheny’s approach to harmony, so it will be more in that direction. But I can’t say for sure... that’s the beauty and the mystery of a second album. GW

Judas Priest



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EMG PICKUPS

SOUTHERN HARMONY... ...AND MUSICAL COMPANIONS

RICH ROBINSON discusses the one-for-all mindset of the reunited **BLACK CROWES**, what they look for in a guitarist, and how the band's new album, ***HAPPINESS BASTARDS***, came together

STORY BY MARK McSTEA & PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROSS HALFIN

THE BLACK CROWES have had a tumultuous history. Numerous musicians have passed through their ranks, and brothers Chris and Rich Robinson's battles with each other — verbal and physical — are legendary. It's been 40 years since the earliest incarnation of the band first came together. Only Rich and Chris remain from Mr. Crowe's Garden, the name the band was using right up to the point that they signed their record deal with Def American in 1989. While the media often has reported on the volatility of inter-band relationships, the Robinson brothers have dealt with the issue by adopting a real-world perspective on the immense challenges that global success brings to a pair of teenagers, barely out of school, who suddenly find the world at their feet.

Rich remembers how their life was turned upside down.

"By the time I was 18 and graduating high school, I'd written a lot of the songs for that first album. But, you know, I'm a teenager. What the fuck do I know about anything? All of a sudden, we put this record out and it sells seven million copies and I'm gone for 12 years. We went from playing clubs in Atlanta to 12 people to playing in Moscow with AC/DC in front of a million people. You go through that in a period of 18 months, how do you handle that? People can deal with failure, but in a way, it can actually be harder to deal with success when it's so big and comes so quickly."

The band have just released their first album in 14 years, *Happiness Bastards*, a record that sees them revisit many of the elements that made their first two albums — *Shake Your Moneymaker* (1990) and *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion* (1992) — essential listening for anyone who likes their rock 'n' roll cut through with a hefty dose of Southern swagger. Rich is excited at the prospect of taking the new record out on tour with the latest lineup of the band, which includes their new guitarist, Nico Bereciartua, and is feeling fired up about the long-term future of the Black Crowes.

Fans have been waiting a long time for a new album.

Yeah, it's been a while. We had the luxury of a year and a half during Covid to start writing songs. We didn't really plan on making a record, per se; we just realized we were going to have an indefinite period of down time. I decided to start writing some songs, and Chris did the same, then we traded our ideas back and forth, which

"PEOPLE CAN DEAL WITH FAILURE, but it can actually be **HARDER TO DEAL WITH SUCCESS** when it's so big and **COMES SO QUICKLY"**

The Black Crowes' Chris [*left*] and Rich Robinson, who's wearing one of his vintage Gibson ES-335s

was how it started. After that, we started the *Shake Your Moneymaker* tour. By the time we got to the end of the tour, we knew it was the right time to do another album.

Do you find it difficult to finish a record, always tweaking and second-guessing what you've done?
I'm very much a "leave well enough alone" person. I believe in putting it down, then saying it's done, you know?

Do the songs change much once you get into the studio?
Not really. The main things are always in place; it's usually just production ideas. Arrangements never really change a lot. We will maybe add more backing vocals or something, but that's really just extra sauce on what we already have. We're not averse to a little exploration, but usually we know what we're aiming for.

Did you record much that didn't make the cut?
There were a couple of extra songs, but typically for us, an album is dictated by the songs. We'll know which ones work together or sound right as a whole, and that selection process almost looks after itself. It's all about the flow of the record and making sure everything flows in the right direction.

How do you and Nico divide your guitar parts?
Firstly, there's the meat of the song, which is always pretty much what I do. I played most of the solos on this record, which isn't something I typically did in the past, before my solo stuff, so that was kind of cool. Nico is a great slide player, so it's a case of bringing him in to do what he does when the song requires it. He really has an understanding of how I play.

What were your main guitars and amps on the album?
I used a few 335s — a '51, a '52 and a '68. They always sound great. I also used some Teles, and I have a '56 Les Paul Special that I used a ton; it always sounds amazing. There was a great '59 TV Junior [*TV Yellow Gibson Les Paul Junior*], a couple of Gretsches, including a White Falcon, plus a Zemaitis and a Dan Armstrong. For amps, I started a small amp company called Muswell. We make one-off amps if someone calls to order one. They're based on a '68 [*Marshall*] Bluesbreaker that I have, which is the best-sounding amp I've ever had. In fact, I used one of the Muswells and the actual Bluesbreaker for a few tracks. I also used an old white Fender amp that was like a Princeton, some Tweed Deluxes and the Silver Jubilee that I've had since '88. It was all over the first album and subsequent tours.

"WE GOT SO BIG so quick, and Chris and I just **GRABBED AHOLD OF THAT DRAGON** and ran with it; **WE DIDN'T LOOK BACK** and we **DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT"**

What about Nico?
He uses an SG Custom a lot, plus another straight SG and a great Les Paul. For amps, he was playing a Super Reverb and an Ampeg V Series.

The opening cut, "Bedside Manners," has a great stomping groove. It sounds like it must have been a blast to record.
There's a lot of energy in that song. It was actually the last song I wrote for the album. That was one of those songs that just came very quickly, you know? As soon as I came up with the intro, I was away and that was it. It has a great vibe — I can't wait to play it live.

One line in the song — "With friends like these, who needs enemies?" — seems to be a pithy retort to various former band members who've been coming out of the woodwork to criticize you and Chris.
Yes, exactly. [*Laughs*] It's pretty funny.

"Wanting and Waiting" has more than a hint of "Jealous Again" in the verses, which is a nice way to tie the album back to the heart of the band's music.
Yeah, I totally see that. It has a different riff, though, which to me always makes me think of AC/DC, that fucking drive. That's what it is, actually; it's a driving song. That was the first song I wrote for the record.

"Follow the Moon" has a hard-hitting riff that's almost redolent of Led Zeppelin.
Yeah, it does have some of that Zep punch. There's some Zeppelin and also the Grease Band, who used to back Joe Cocker, and

Chris and Rich [*right*] again, this time with one of his handmade Teye Guitars models

[*next page*] Rich with a TV Yellow Gibson Les Paul Junior

they made some records in their own right. There's something of their vibe in there as well. That really cool Zeppelin-y chorus of guitars always sounds great to me.

The solo on "Cross Your Fingers" has a fantastically warm, creamy, neck-pickup Les Paul tone.
That's in open C. It's a hard tuning to solo in, though. The rhythm part is one thing, but I can't really switch guitars for the solo, so it's a little tricky. It was my '68 Les Paul goldtop. It was damaged in the floods after Hurricane Sandy [*2012*]; I actually lost about 70 guitars in that flood. I had it restored by RS Guitarworks [*in Winchester, Kentucky*], and it came back exponentially better than it was. I don't know how they did that because they also worked on a 335 that was damaged, and it just wasn't the same guitar anymore, which wasn't their fault — it's just the way the flood affected the guitar. The goldtop, though, sounds and plays better.

It's strange to think that it's been 40 years since you and Chris first teamed up to form a band.
Yeah. We got big so quick, and Chris and I just grabbed ahold of that dragon and ran with it; we didn't look back and we didn't think about it. I think that created a dynamic unto itself. Not only a shift in dynamic between Chris and me as brothers, but also a shift in the band dynamic. How do we — as incredibly young and naïve individuals who were totally unprepared for what was happening to us — deal with the people around us and their agendas?

Do you think the periods spent apart over the years gave you a perspective that enabled you to get back together again with a new energy?
As a result of that amazing level of success and pressure, we spent most of our lives in a toxic state of putting ourselves as *brothers* second or even third, when it should have been first. The fact that we stopped in 2013 definitely got us away from that place that we were in prior to the split. It enabled me to think about things and acknowledge that it's easy for me to blame Chris 100 percent, and likewise — it's easy for him to blame me 100 percent. That space definitely allowed me to see how I could have done some things differently.

Did the process of playing solo and then forming Magpie Salute give you another perspective on band dynamics?
After doing four solo albums and two solo EPs, then making two albums with Magpie Salute, to have those same band problems come back and [*to experience*] the same toxic band members' behaviors, I thought, "Jesus, what the fuck is this? I might as well be with my brother!" [*Laughs*] A lot of that was the impetus for getting back together, but when we did get back together, we really made a point to say that we wanted to do this right. We don't want some sort of money-grab, one-off tour. We agreed that if we were going to do this again, we needed to put our relationship first and start from scratch. And also to find people who are positive and support us, and who want to succeed with us, instead of always trying to tear it down.

Does it feel like you're both in it for the long haul this time?
Yeah, very much. The Magpie Salute was done anyway. Marc [*Ford*] and I started it, but old habits started to creep in, and some toxic behaviors started happening, so I didn't want to deal with that stuff anymore. This is where my heart is, this is my lifelong body of work. With my brother, with this past and this future — this is where I want to be right now.

You've been through a lot of guitarists in the band. What do you look for in a guitarist?
Pretty much every position in the band has been through varying personalities and players. [*Laughs*] My belief is that the song is king. You can put the best solo in the world in an average song and nobody is going to give a shit. You put an average solo in a great song, and you've still got a great song. You play with different musicians and their contribution is a big part of making everything cohesive, but people's personalities, their habits and their issues get in the way, and it can't always stay the same.

I always want someone to really serve the song. Sometimes people are in it for themselves — "Look what I can do!" You have to say, "Dude, put the guitar down; there's a song here." [*Laughs*]

Guitarists often dedicate so much time to improving their soloing skills that they forget about mastering rhythm guitar, learning how to groove, keeping things tight and driving the song forward.
Absolutely. Think about it — if you solo all the way through a song it just becomes white noise. There's a thing about that position of guitarist in our band, where I think people don't realize what the role is, and they take it upon themselves to play too much. Nico loves this band, he understands and respects what we are and what we do, and you can tell by his personality, his playing, his positivity and his friendship that he gets it. I'm thrilled to have him in the band. The same can be said about Culley [*Symington*], our new drummer. Again, he loves the band, respects the history and understands what he needs to do to lift the music. Same with Erik [*Deutsch*], our keyboard player. When we reference Simon Kirke or Ron Wood, they know what we mean; it's the common language that moves the band forwards. Sven [*Pipien, bass*] and I have that language, you know. I'm really happy with where we are now as a band.

With the ever-changing personnel, does it help keep things fresh or would you prefer a long-term stable situation?
I guess that's a yes and no answer. I would rather have a consistent lineup for the long haul. The changing keeps us on our toes, but when you get a band that plays a hundred shows together, that's when they start sounding like a *band* and the magic happens. It's cool to get a new person with a new energy, but I would prefer to have a stable lineup where we really forge something special together. It's fine if someone wants to move on; I want people in the band who have reverence for the songs, people who are happy and who want to be here.

It's fascinating to watch you play through some of your songs on YouTube. The parts are extremely complex and dense. Do you actually create the song in that way?
Yeah, man. That's how I've always written, and that's what was so amazing about Eddie Harsch [*keyboards*] back in the day. He was such a gifted musician; he could always just come in and fit. When there's that much going on in my guitar part, I can see how that would be difficult. I always wrote like Nick Drake — in my own mind. He was always one of my favorite guitar players; I was trying to fit Nick Drake into Keith Richards' playing. [*Laughs*] How do you square those two things? That was what I was trying to solve. The way Nick worked wasn't really that unlike someone like Mississippi Fred McDowell or Bukka White or Furry Lewis for me. That symphony of sound coming out of one guitar — that's how I always wrote. With Nico being a huge Crowes fan, he's aware of how the band fits together, when to play, when to lay out or whatever. He sees what a part needs. The way that Chris sings off what I do rhythmically, that push and pull, is probably the essence of our sound.

Do you think open G was what enabled you to find that way of constructing your parts and writing songs?
Well, to go deep into that tuning can be difficult. You can strum chords and they'll sound cool, but to go further and find interesting suspensions, that's the key to that sound. That set me on the path to the point where I use about 15 different tunings now. They range all over the place. The first open tuning I used was E, which is what I used to write "She Talks to Angels." I've done a lot of experimenting; I use an open C tuning with a C octave between the six and fifth strings, which I used on a few songs on this album. I came up with an open D7, which is interesting. Of course, DADGAD is a great one. There's something about the timbre of the way open tuning strings resonate. It really inspires me.

Do you find it easy to get your head into the different tunings when you're changing tunings so much, or does it require a lot of focused thinking?
It definitely requires a focus, particularly if you're soloing. [*Laughs*] You can't resort to familiar patterns or places on the neck, so it definitely keeps you on your toes. A lot of the open tunings are difficult to solo in; you can do cool things with the rhythm guitar parts, but you can't do any of the things that you would typically do if you were soloing in standard tuning. I like the challenge, though. If something sounds good, it makes me want to dig in and figure it out.

Looking back over your catalog, what are the highlights for you, and how do you see *Happiness Bastards* fitting in with that history?
Shake was the springboard for everything, and I love it and respect it, but I think *Southern Harmony* was the first time that we stepped into our own skin. We were

firing on all cylinders as a band; we'd just come off 18 months on the road, playing 350 shows. We went right in to record that album and made it in eight days. It's live, and it felt that way. I love that record for that reason. *Three Snakes* [*1996*] is one of my favorites. We weren't trying to make a commercial record, and we sure as hell didn't. [*Laughs*] I also really like *Lions* [*2001*]. There's some cool shit on that record. Some people don't like that album, but I love it. "Lay It All on Me" is a great song, and there's "Soul Singing" — some great stuff. I'm not thrilled with how the album sounds, but I do like the songs. *Warpaint* [*2008*] has some good songs, and I feel that the new album fits perfectly in the midst of those records. It's not like all of a sudden we have a DJ in the band, and we've gone off on some bizarre tangent. It's appropriate, it sounds classic but almost... modern wouldn't be the word, but maybe fresh would be the best way to describe it.

Is there another album in the pipeline?
We're not thinking that far ahead at the moment. We're just thinking about the tour and looking forward to playing some of the new songs live for the first time. There's a tremendous energy about the band, and I can't wait to take that out on the stage. GW

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Judas Priest's Richie Faulkner [*left*] and Rob Halford perform in Nashville, March 23, 2022

BRITISH STEEL

JUDAS PRIEST'S RICHIE FAULKNER, ROB HALFORD AND GLENN TIPTON DISCUSS THE INS AND OUTS OF *INVINCIBLE SHIELD*, A BOLD NEW ALBUM THAT LASHES OUT AT HUMAN FRAILTY

AS THEY PREPARE for the release of their 19th album, *Invincible Shield*, Judas Priest are still pondering the randomness of life and the frailty of the human condition. Since the release of their 2018's blowtorch-to-the-face record, *Firepower*, most of the guys in the band have been anything but invincible. Vocalist Rob Halford has battled and seems to have beaten prostate cancer; guitarist Glenn Tipton continues to struggle with a debilitating case of Parkinson's disease, which six years ago ended his ability to tour. And lead guitarist Richie Faulkner vividly remembers suffering an aortic aneurysm on September 26, 2021, while Priest were playing the Louder Than Life festival in Louisville, Kentucky.

"It's crazy to think I easily could have died then and there," says Faulkner, who assumed pole position for the writing and recording of *Invincible Shield* and worked closely with Tipton to voice guitar ideas the guitar hero can no longer play. "If the hospital wasn't so close to the venue and they didn't have one of the leading heart surgery teams in the country, I definitely wouldn't have made it."

Faulkner's survival and rapid recovery has been nothing short of miraculous, even with the intensive follow-up procedures he underwent and the continued precautions he has to undertake. "Overall, my chest and everything is all fine," Faulkner says. "I had to go back in again in 2022 to have another open-heart procedure,

BY JON WIEDERHORN

JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES

JUDAS PRIEST: TRACK BY TRACK

Richie Faulkner walks us through *Invincible Shield*

"PANIC ATTACK"

"It's the fastest song on the record, and it's a bulldozer. There are synth drums, and then it goes into a classic, fast, Priest-style verse, which has heaviness, speed and melody from Rob. The vocal melody is great and there are some progressive bits that are in 7/8. There's also a nice, long guitar solo in there, and a solo at the end as well. And there are guitar harmonies there, so it's got everything I would associate with Priest other than a clean guitar part."

"THE SERPENT AND THE KING"

"It's a real challenge to play that bloody song. Again, it's one of those songs that took on an intense vibe. Rob is doing that shrieking, banshee type of alpha voice he's famous for. So, anything else you come up with to embellish the song has got to match that intensity. Some of the guitar parts are really heavy, and they come crashing in. It's fun to play and it will be interesting to see what we can do with it live — if I can get the parts down properly."

"INVINCIBLE SHIELD"

"I think it's the longest track on the record. There are a lot of

but that's all fine and cleared up. One of the only side effects now is I have to play a bit more regularly. I'm not a young man anymore. I can't leave the guitar for two weeks and then come back and be right up to speed. I have to stay on top of my playing, and some of that is a result of what happened. But as far as heart damage and the aorta stuff around it, it's all fixed. And everything is kept at bay with medication. So, you never know what's around the corner, but hopefully I'm okay now."

From the opening riff of the fast, urgent album opener "Panic Attack" to the pounding, riff-saturated "Giants in the Sky," a reference to deceased metal pioneers Ronnie James Dio and Lemmy Kilmister, *Invincible Shield* is a burst of energy, perseverance and defiance. Reminiscent of Judas Priest's classic Eighties albums *Screaming for Vengeance* and *Defenders of the Faith*, but with the contemporary production of *Firepower*, the new album is all volume, aggression and sonic acrobatics, ranging from the triumphant melodies of "Crown of Horns" to the barreling, full-blown and rhythmically complex "The Serpent and the King." While *Invincible Shield* is a powerful celebration of pure metal, it's also a relentless, brazen middle finger to mortality and severe illness.

"Sometimes, mortality brings out the best in people," says Halford, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer during the pandemic, underwent a prostatectomy and radiation therapy and has been cancer-free for two years. "That kind of struggle with mortality is all over this record because the instinct to survive is something you channel into yourself as a person, and the things you've been through and witnessed come across in your music. These songs are on fire. They're absolutely blazing because no matter what we're up against, the Priest will never curl up into a ball. We're kicking and screaming, horns up and legs out — metal boots stomping all over the place."

During separate revealing Zoom interviews with Faulkner and Halford, and an e-mail exchange with Tipton, the songwriting trio of Judas Priest addressed the obstacles they faced forging *Invincible Shield*, the way they had to modify their creative process, how their undying support for one another has brought them closer, and Faulkner's constant battle to evolve as a player and composer and his unwillingness to settle for anything short of topping his last great achievement.

Where do you see *Invincible Shield* in relation to the rest of the band's catalog?

RICHIE FAULKNER: People keep comparing this to other things we've done, and I understand their desire to do that, but I think *Invincible Shield* is very much Priest today. That classic sound is ingrained in everyone, including me, but we always try to do something a little bit different than what we've done before. And that doesn't come from some *need* to do something different, it comes naturally. I think creative people naturally try to do things that are new and inspiring to them. As a musician, you have to scratch that creative itch and do stuff that satisfies you.

ROB HALFORD: This is probably one of the most definitive Priest metal albums we've done. I think it's a reflection of where we're at now, and a continuation from where we were with *Firepower* while making references to other places in Priest's history.

Richie, how do you see *Invincible Shield* as a development of your contributions to the band?

FAULKNER: As a guitar player, I'm always thinking of how I can make what I'm doing better than what I did the last time. I focus a lot on how I can make what I wrote more appropriate and more valuable as a musical statement. So maybe I'll construct the solos before recording them. That's something different for me.

Is that what you did for *Invincible Shield*?

FAULKNER: I constructed a few of my leads early and brought them into the studio. That gave me a foundation to work from. I still did about 70 percent of my solos in the studio, but what I did was run through one that's improvised, and then run through another I wrote. After a couple takes, there are motifs that become prominent, and that's what I build the whole solo around.

You've established yourself as the lead guitarist for Judas Priest without altering the band's core sound.

FAULKNER: After 13 years in Priest playing both Glenn's and K.K. [*Downing, former Priest guitarist*]'s stuff, everything they've done has become a part of my style as well. On a very intimate level, I'm playing the "Painkiller" solo every night, so that's become a part of my vocabulary. So, I'm doing things like sweep picking and some tapping, which is new for me.

Did you want to write differently than you have in the past?

FAULKNER: I've always been attracted to slightly progressive elements, and I think we're all into that, so I introduced some parts that were a bit unconventional in that sense this time. And if they didn't tick the right boxes, we left them on the shelf and found something else that worked better. But a lot of those parts stayed in, which was exciting. Maybe they were a little more progressive, maybe they weren't. The only rule was that it had to sound like Judas Priest, and that left a lot of room to explore.

Did you feel more comfortable writing with the guys on *Invincible Shield* than you did on *Firepower*?

"It is hard for me to give 100 percent now due to my Parkinson's, so Richie took more of the load," Glenn Tipton says

"IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT WE CAN DO WITH IT LIVE — IF I CAN GET THE PARTS DOWN PROPERLY"

parts to it because sometimes when you're writing stuff, you put down your ideas, and if you have four or five ideas that come to you at once, sometimes they work well together. You might think it's one riff after the other, but we always make sure everything fits together. You can make three songs out of those kinds of things, but for this one, we just made one song out of all those riffs, and it worked. It's a little bit progressive, with all the twists and turns and the different parts. The solo is inspired by Randy Rhoads, and that's a challenge to play as well."

"DEVIL IN DISGUISE"

"That came from an idea Rob had about a Sweeney Todd character in Birmingham. I think they called him Percy the Poisoner. We thought Percy the Poisoner was a silly name for a song, so we changed it. The groove is very much like 'Killing Machine,' so it's an upper mid-paced kind of song that is both melodic and heavy. For the guitars, I was playing a real Ritchie Blackmore-style groove, and as I was playing it, things started to click. It became evident it would work really well for the song. It's not really fast or technical, but there are a lot of bends. And sometimes that stuff is more difficult to play than the fast stuff. You've got to capture the right vibe of the bends and the feel of the solo and make it interesting without being overly flashy. I think I did that, so that's one of my favorite solos on the record."

"GATES OF HELL"

"I've been kicking this around for a while. The intro is very similar to a solo I played on 'You've Got Another Thing Coming.' It's the same kind of register, but I changed it around to make it something different. It's a bit more hard rock

JAMES HODGE PHOTOGRAPHY

than some of the other songs, but when you play with Priest you have that license to explore those things because there's been those elements before in the past. Someone told me it sounds a bit more Eighties. I don't know if that's true, but I love Priest stuff from the Eighties like *Hell Bent for Leather* and *British Steel*."

"CROWN OF HORNS"

"I think this is probably the most melodic track on the record, akin to 'Worth Fighting For' from [*2005's*] *Angel of Retribution* or 'Never the Heroes' [*from 2018's* Firepower] — that type of mid-paced melodic anthem. There are some great melodies in the middle eight, and the way the intro starts is the way the lead solo starts as well, so it has this motif that recurs. It's a little different for me because it's got a bit of tapping, which I didn't really do before."

"AS GOD IS MY WITNESS"

"I sent a demo of this to Andy Sneap. He said, 'Ah, this one has got to go on the album because it's a fast one.' The working title for it was 'Shitlord.' I don't know why; maybe I'll use that name in the future. But I remember Andy saying, 'Yeah, we've got to do Shitlord!' which was pretty funny. That's one of the songs I wrote the solo for before we went into the studio. It's fast and there are lots of quick riffs played with alternate picking. I did all kinds of stuff on the solo, from strong melodies to fast runs, and even some tapping. It's full-on and it's a joy to play."

"TRIAL BY FIRE"

"We wrote it during the *Firepower* sessions, but we never quite got it right. There was something about it that didn't work. We needed to put it away and return to it. This time, we figured out a way to make the song work. All we needed to do was work on it a little bit and make it flow better. I love the way the drums fit around the riff."

"ESCAPE FROM REALITY"

"That was one of Glenn's ideas that he worked on for a while.

FAULKNER: It was just a little different. I went in thinking, "Okay, you've got a bit of history with the band now. You co-wrote two records with them. How can you make this one better?" I know better is a nebulous term, but for me, it's *got* to be better. I'm representing one of the biggest and most influential heavy metal bands in the world, and the bar is higher. But that's nothing new. What's different, obviously, is Glenn's situation is different now than it was for the first two albums I did with Priest. I knew I was going to have to take on more of the guitar load.

Did you work more with Rob than you did before?

FAULKNER: We did a lot together. Rob and I would put ideas together in the studio. Rob would usually come in with a vocal idea and I'd find something that worked with it on guitar. At first, you might not know what you've got, but a little way into the creative process, the album takes on its own character. And once you recognize that character, you start to embellish it. At the end, hopefully you've got this monster that you can unleash on the world. It's exciting. It's scary, though.

What was scary about making *Invincible Shield*?

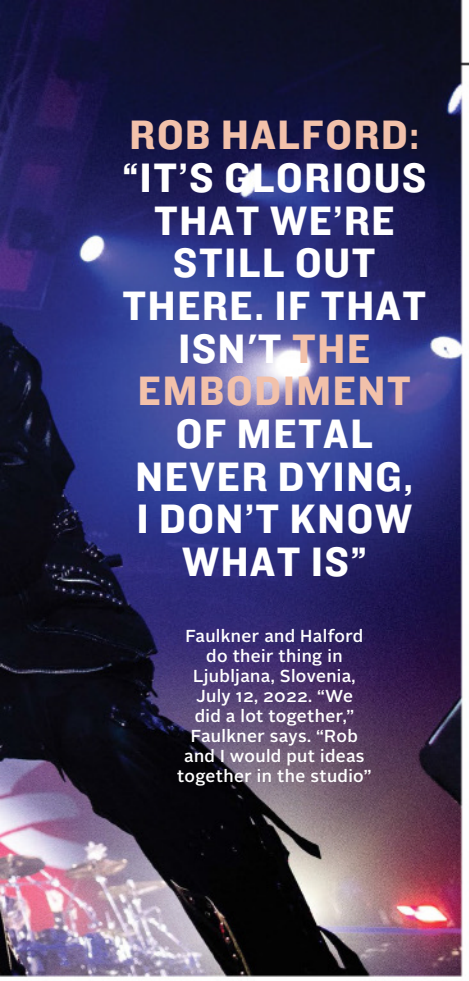
FAULKNER: *Firepower* was a really well-received record. It was a big success. Now, how do you follow that? They've done it before, but this was my first rodeo with that kind of situation — following up something that's been really well received. That was a challenge, but it's a good challenge to have because you have to up the bar on yourself.

Can't you make yourself crazy constantly trying to better yourself?

FAULKNER: Challenges are what make albums unique, and there's always a unique challenge for every album. When I was younger, maybe it was financial constraints. You didn't have enough time in the studio, or the studio wasn't big enough, or didn't work the way you wanted it to. There are always challenges you have to work around. With *Angel of Retribution,* I was getting my studio bearings. And then we couldn't record during a pandemic. And then we had a tour, so we had to record during the gaps in the tour. That was another challenge. But the challenges always happen right up until the album is complete and you're satisfied. Before that, you're always thinking it could be better or it's not quite right, so you work on it to embellish it or make it more interesting.

Can you think of a particular challenge you faced with a song on *Invincible Shield*?

FAULKNER: The original version of "Panic Attack" had another slower part before the guitar solo. It was too long. It didn't feel right, so we took it out. When it's right, you know it's right, but sometimes it's hard to tell



ROB HALFORD: "IT'S GLORIOUS THAT WE'RE STILL OUT THERE. IF THAT ISN'T THE EMBODIMENT OF METAL NEVER DYING, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS"

Faulkner and Halford do their thing in Ljubljana, Slovenia, July 12, 2022. "We did a lot together," Faulkner says. "Rob and I would put ideas together in the studio"

MARIO SKRABAN/REDFERNS

why it's *not* right. One thing I always think about is if it's not grooving, it's not right. When it's vibing, that's when you know you've finally gotten it.

Glenn, you've been upfront about how you can't play the way you used to because of Parkinson's disease, which must be terribly frustrating. Did you change the way you worked as a band to accommodate your condition?

GLENN TIPTON: No, the three of us all worked together the same as normal. However, it is hard for me to give 100 percent now due to my Parkinson's so Richie took more of the load. But I always try to look forward and ahead and be optimistic — that's how I go about my guitar playing.

FAULKNER: Writing-wise, when we were in the room together, and when Glenn had an idea, but he couldn't play it, he would communicate the idea to me and tell me what to do. That might trigger a new idea from me, so there was a lot of back and forth. There were other ideas he had that he *could* play, and he played those.

TIPTON: I have to take each day as it comes. Some days I feel strong, so I have a good day and I can play more. And others I feel weak so I can't really play much.

HALFORD: Yes, but Glenn — his input, his validity, the reference points that he makes with his hands — are all over this album. So, as far as what this man stands for in the life of Judas Priest, the relationship hasn't changed a bit. The only thing that's changed is the way Parkinson's has robbed him of his articulation on the guitar. So, he has very, very carefully passed over certain feelings toward the guitar passages to Richie. You're hearing guitars that make you think of Glenn because that's the way Glenn would perform. But it's Richie playing a lot of it. So Glenn is all over this album. He's playing on a lot of the songs, but those moments where he wasn't able to, Richie is picking up and carrying that metal torch for Glenn.

Glenn, do you sit or hold the guitar differently when you play, or play a lighter guitar?

TIPTON: No, I do everything the same and I still use my same guitars — the Hamer Phantom Signature Model and my Hamer Signature GTX. But I have to work very hard to get the sounds I want these days. I did come up with some guitar parts on my own, but when Richie was involved, he took the ideas I put forward and improved on them.

Richie, when you came in with a song, did Glenn work with you on it or did you just record what you wrote?

FAULKNER: Glenn knows exactly how to make something sound like Priest. I might come in with an almost complete song, and Glenn would suggest a little turnaround that was totally out of my school of thinking, and it made the song better. And then there are a couple of songs on the record, "Sons of Thunder" and "Escape From Reality," and those were primarily Glenn's ideas, and he had more to do with them. Obviously, it was a challenge to make everything work, but I think we knew how to handle it and we all worked together in a way that was really rewarding.

HALFORD: What's interesting about Richie is the way I've watched him transform from the guitar player that he was when he first became the lead guitarist for Judas Priest for *Redeemer of Souls*, to the creative and empathetic musician he is today. Glenn mentored Richie, and Richie loves Glenn so much that the understanding of everything Glenn has done with Priest has become a part of who Richie is. And that understanding has been very profound. Over the past 10 or so years, Richie has matured and blossomed as a guitarist so he has his own identity — his own distinctive way of playing — and at the same time, he's been able to move to another place to pick up for another guitar player. There are very few people that can do that and do it so well and with such love and such care and understanding, so that you get an extraordinary performance whether Richie is playing something he wrote or playing something for Glenn.

Richie, did you play all the leads on the album?

FAULKNER: Not all of them. Glenn could manage "Sons of Thunder," "Vicious Circle" and a couple others. But if he couldn't play something, I took the helm. He wrote most of the song, and it has a different texture to it than the rest of the album. The song is downtuned, and when you downtune a song, it takes on a different character. There's a darker atmosphere both lyrically and sonically. I tried to match that with the guitar parts. It's even got a bit of a 'Killing Machine' vibe in the middle. I wrote the midsection, and in that part Rob did this Ozzy, Birmingham-esque kind of vocal treatment, which I love."

"SONS OF THUNDER"

"That was the other song Glenn brought in. It's very Priest. Some songs bring up certain imagery right away, and when you hear 'Sons of Thunder' you can imagine motorbikes roaring down the freeway. There's this real 'Hell Bent for Leather' vibe to it. We all stood around the microphone and did gang vocals on the chorus to give it a metal community-type feel. There are two solos on that; I did the first one, and the second one is Glenn. His is short and to the point; he has a talent for getting everything that needs to be said in the shortest possible time. That's the mark of a great songwriter."

"GIANTS IN THE SKY"

"It's not completely downtuned. It's in drop D. Everything else is in either E or E♭. So "Giants in the Sky" has more of a bluesy, riffy vibe. It's about the legends we've lost like Lemmy and Ronnie James Dio. But the music they made lives on. There's an acoustic part in the middle, which I played on a nylon-string Spanish classical guitar. That kind of guitar is what separates the men from the boys because it doesn't hide any mistakes. The strings are tougher. It took me probably a whole day before we got the take that we used — because it's just hard, man. I'm not that manly to play those strings and be that precise. Every pop and scrape and missed note shows up, and it's really unforgiving. To be honest, I came away from there thinking I should play more acoustic guitar purely to get my chops up, strengthen my hands and make me a more precise player. But I didn't really do that."

— Jon Wiederhorn

Faulkner on stage at the 37th Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Los Angeles, November 5, 2022

THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME

Did you try to play those leads in Glenn's style?

FAULKNER: As a player, I'm so heavily influenced by Glenn anyway, but I don't play as much legato as him. I come from the Zakk Wylde school of picking, and Zakk picks every note. I can't do that, but I pick most of the notes. There's a little bit of legato in my style, but there was definitely more legato going on before. But having said that, I did kind of take on that role of playing a lot of Glenn's parts. If he couldn't do it, I'd take on that role. There's stuff I played on that's unmistakably Tipton, both in the composition and guitar technique. But that's why he's such a vital and important part of Priest.

What guitar sound were you shooting for on *Invincible Shield*? It sounds very Priest, but as you said, there's something about the sound that makes it very relevant today.

FAULKNER: Well, it's a good old Marshall JCM800 with a Tube Screamer-type pedal in the front. It's a tried and tested approach when it comes to the way we EQ my sound. I'm quite a mid-heavy player, anyway. I think it gives the guitar extra presence and character. But after I recorded everything with my setup, I sent the tracks to producer Andy Sneap, and he re-amped them in his studio because I've got no time for microphone placement, and Andy is a real authority on that. So I sent him the DI tracks and he put them through cabinets and amplifiers that he's got. He was using 800s and plexis to find that good, old Priest sound. There aren't many effects there, but there's a bit of reverb and delay that was done post-production. But at the heart of it, it's that Marshall sound through a Gibson Explorer and one of my Flying Vs.

RICHIE FAULKNER: "THE ONLY RULE WAS THAT IT HAD TO SOUND LIKE JUDAS PRIEST, AND THAT LEFT A LOT OF ROOM TO EXPLORE"

An Ibanez Tube Screamer is a go-to for blues and other kinds of rock, but when you play it through a tube amp it tightens up the low ends and provides extra texture.

FAULKNER: You ramp up the distortion on the JCM800 and that's the main sound. The Tube Screamer wasn't an Ibanez — it was a clone of a clone, a [*Wampler*] Tumnus [*overdrive*] that I have in front of my amps on stage.

Would *Invincible Shield* be a good swan song for Judas Priest, or will there be another album?

FAULKNER: Who knows? If this one's well received and there are enough ideas creatively to do another one, then it's possible. We'll have to wait and see, really. At this moment, I'm out of ideas. I've got nothing left. That always happens with me, and then I start coming up with things. But where are these ideas going to come from? I don't know. But somehow, somewhere along the line, you start building up ideas and songs. They come from somewhere. After *Firepower* I was out of ideas and then we somehow created *Invincible Shield*. We'll see what the future holds.

HALFORD: I think Richie is an endless well of guitar ideas, and Glenn has vaults of riffs we've never used, and a good riff will last forever. It's all about perspective and presentation. When you've got all that sorted out, why stop? There's a fire that's really burning right now and it has been even before *Invincible Shield* left the launch pad. Right now, we're focused on touring for the album, but when we finish touring, what are we going to do? Well, Priest has always maintained its relevance and importance in metal by showing you what we can do next. And the other thing is, I don't like 19. It's an odd number. I'm an "even number" kind of guy. I like 20. But the bottom line is it's absolutely glorious that we're still out there. Glenn's still thriving as a musician, and so is Richie after what he went through with his heart condition. I'm thriving after what I went through with my cancer condition. If that isn't the embodiment of metal never dying and metal never surrendering, then I don't know what is. There's this importance in our lives as musicians to never give up and never give in, to also keep pushing ahead and going toward the metal torch on the horizon. That's what drives us. GW

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A LONG TIME AGO … TWO LONG ISLAND TEENAGERS NAMED JOE SATRIANI AND STEVE VAI RECORDED A DEMO CALLED "REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR AND A HALF." NOW — MORE THAN 50 AND A HALF YEARS LATER — THESE GUITAR SUPERSTARS ARE FINALLY RETURNING TO THE CONCEPT OF RECORDING ORIGINAL MUSIC TOGETHER, AND THEY'VE EVEN LINED UP A CO-HEADLINING, JUST-THE-TWO-OF-'EM TOUR

WORDS BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK PHOTOS BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

"I OPEN THE DOOR AND THERE'S THIS 12-YEAR-OLD KID, A STRINGLESS GUITAR IN ONE HAND, A PACK OF STRINGS IN THE OTHER"

SATCH & VAI

JOE SATRIANI still remembers the first time he laid eyes on **STEVE VAI**. It was 1972 in Carle Place, Long Island, and at the time, Satriani, then just a teenager, was already known around the neighborhood as a killer guitar player — and maybe an even better guitar teacher.

Which is when Vai came knocking at his front door.

"It was your typical Long Island afternoon," Satriani says. "I open the door and there's this 12-year-old kid, a stringless guitar in one hand, a pack of strings in the other." Suffice it to say, Satriani wasn't immediately impressed. "I really didn't know him," he says of Vai, "although I knew and feared his older siblings. When you'd see them walking down the hallway at Carle Place High School, you just moved to the side. Impressive family, you know?"

Satriani laughs, then continues. "So Steve shows up wanting to play guitar, and I think he knew about me because I had been teaching another local kid, John Sergio, who was Steve's friend. John was a good guy and a really good student, and I probably never would've let Steve in the door had he not said John's name. But I thought, 'Okay, let's see what this is all about...'"

Needless to say, anyone who has picked up a guitar or a *Guitar World* magazine — or, for that matter, has had even a nominal interest in guitar-based music — over the past 40 years knows what this story is all about. Today, Joe Satriani and Steve Vai are two undisputed giants of the six- (and seven-) string universe. Their individual lists of accomplishments are too extensive, and by this point well-known, to spend time cataloging here, and it's hardly hyperbole to say that there are few, if any, players in the post-Van Halen world that have been so influential, so successful and so beloved for so long. Throughout the years, Satriani and Vai have remained the closest of friends, as well as each other's biggest supporters and public boosters. They have each pushed not just guitar playing but guitar design into uncharted territories with their various Ibanez signature models (Joe's expansive JS Series; Steve's JEM, Universe and PIA ranges) and have taken similar leaps with their respective pickup collaborations with DiMarzio. They have appeared on multiple *Guitar World* covers — on their own and together — and graced stages throughout the world alongside other guitarists on package tours like the long-running, Joe Satriani-conceived G3.

Two things they have not done together? A co-headlining, just-the-two-of-'em tour, and writing and recording original music. But that all changes this year, as the pair have teamed up for the appropriately named Satch-Vai tour, a first-ever outing that sees the guitarists criss-crossing the U.S. for roughly three dozen performances. What's more, in preparation for the run, they've been working on something extra special: brand-new instrumental music that, at the time of *Guitar World*'s interview, they report is close to completion. "It's all right there, on my computer," Vai says, pointing to a workstation behind him in his home studio. Adds Satriani, "We have three pieces that are 90 percent finished. We've both got ridiculous schedules, so we're not even thinking about how impossible it is to get it done. But we'll figure it out."

To be sure, even after all these decades, these two remain fully engaged in their musical pursuits. Satch spent much of last year on the road in support of his 18th solo album, *The Elephants of Mars*, and is deep in woodshedding mode for the Best of All Worlds 2024 summer tour, where he will assume the herculean task of recreating Eddie Van Halen's guitar parts alongside Sammy Hagar, Michael Anthony and Jason Bonham in a celebratory, VH-focused show. As for Vai, he recently wrapped a mammoth globetrotting run for his 2022 studio effort, *Inviolate*, a record and tour that also saw him debut a brand-new, utterly mind-blowing guitar creation, the Hydra, a three-necked monster featuring, among other components: seven- and 12-string guitars; a four-string ¾-scale-length bass; 13 harp strings; single-coil, humbucking, piezo, MIDI and sustainer pickups; half-fretless necks; floating and hardtail bridges and much more. Additionally, this past January, Vai and Satriani, along with Eric Johnson, embarked on a short G3 U.S. tour, reuniting the original trio that headlined the inaugural 1996 run.

Joe Satriani [*left*] and Steve Vai, photographed in Los Angeles, February 12, 2024. "We're having fun and getting it done," Satriani says

Turning his attention to the Satch-Vai tour, Vai says, "I think in the back of our minds someplace, we felt it would've been kind of crazy not to eventually do something like this. Because while we've done G3 over the years, and we've been able to record some things together — a couple of guest spots here and there on various records — it's never been just me and Joe before." As for their new collaborative music, he continues, "I think it's all part of the path. And it just organically came about: 'Hey, since we're doing this tour, what if we fool around with some co-creations?' And I'm very eager for the fans to hear these tracks. I think they're gonna love them."

"We're having fun and getting it done," Satriani adds.

"I'm just so glad it's finally happening," Vai says, then laughs. "Because by this point it's something that has been percolating for, I would say, 55 years."

To celebrate this 55-years-in-the-making moment, Satriani and Vai sat down with *Guitar World* to discuss their unique companionship and, now, collaboration. Over the course of a wide-ranging interview, the two expounded on their earliest days together, talked about their new tour and music and picked their favorite songs from one another. They also looked at the state of the guitar community today, mused on how players can continue to "explore the infinite" and explained why, if you don't know your guitar notes, you don't know... well, you'll see.

COVER MODELS

guitarists:
Satch & Vai!

JOE SATRIANI and STEVE VAI discuss the guitars they're holding in six key *Guitar World* covers from the past. Along the way, we learn about some guitar thefts, loud photoshoots, hair, pants and flexi-discs...

IN HONOR OF Joe Satriani and Steve Vai's third joint *GW* cover, we've decided to present a special "Satch and Vai" edition of Cover Models, a recurring one-page feature that we kicked off in our April 2024 issue. That's when we track down *GW* cover stars from the distant or recent past and ask them to tell us about the guitars they're holding on their covers. This month, we'd like to send out some big-time thanks to Mike Mesker, Vai's art director, who contributed several historical details concerning Vai's guitars.

Interviews:
Richard Bienstock

JOE SATRIANI

1. NOVEMBER 1989
Guitar World
Original photographer:
Neil Zlozower

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?

SATRIANI: That's my first Ibanez JS prototype, which we called "Black Dog." It had a Roadstar neck and a basswood 540 Radius body. By the time of this photo it also had a

To state the obvious, you guys have known each other for a minute. But while you've crossed musical paths over the years, this is the first time you've ever done a co-headlining tour or released collaborative music. What led to this moment?

JOE SATRIANI: It goes back to when my son, ZZ [*Satriani's son is an L.A.-based filmmaker*], called me a few years ago about what was then the 25th anniversary of G3, saying he wanted to document it. Everything just sort of snowballed from there. We went into making the documentary, and then getting the idea to do a reunion tour [*of the original 1996 G3 lineup with Satriani, Vai and Eric Johnson*]. And then Steve and I and all of our people started saying, "Hey, we should just keep going." The question was, how do we keep going? And that became, "Let's do some shows... and maybe make some music too, while we can." So that's how it started. Because I think we were pretty deep in our own worlds prior to that. I know that, like me, Steve has production books laying around his desk with millions of ideas, and he's always trying to figure out, "What year do I get to do this project?" We each just keep going in our directions until someone knocks on our shell and says, "Hey, come out and do something with somebody else."

STEVE VAI: Amen to that. And I thought it was perfect timing, really. Because this all started when we were kids, and it's just been such a nice journey along the way. And Joe's right — we both are very creative in the little secrets we like to manifest. But at this point we've done so much, and we've toured our own music by ourselves to the hilt. So you want to stretch out. You want to do some different things.

Tell us about the new music you've been working on together.

VAI: Well you know, there's many ways to collaborate. I was out on tour for the last year and a half, basically, so it was a little difficult to wrap my brain around writing a song. But I opened my email one day, and there were

"I WOULD WALK INTO JOE'S ROOM — AND IT WAS THE COOLEST TEENAGE LONG ISLAND BEDROOM EVER"

DiMarzio FRED pickup in the bridge and a PAF Pro in the neck. [*Luthier*] Gary Brawer had done extensive fret and fretboard work as well.

Why did you bring this particular guitar to the shoot?

I started using it live in '88 and used it all over *Flying in a Blue Dream* and throughout the Nineties. It was one of my favorites to play at that time because it had a very unique feel and tone. Since it was a distressed, plain black guitar, I thought a little artwork would improve the look and give it a cool vibe. It was featured on the back of the *Flying in a Blue Dream* album, so it only seemed right to bring it to the photo session.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?

The first time I recorded with this guitar would have been for "The Crush of Love" on the *Dreaming #11* live/studio EP. The song, recorded and mixed by John Cuniberti, featured Jeff Campitelli on drums, along with my guitar, bass and keyboard work. It was first released on a *Guitar Player* flexi-disc! I really got to know the guitar during the *Flying in a Blue Dream* album sessions in '89, as it was my main guitar for that album.

What do you love about this guitar?

This was the first guitar that I had a chance to mold to fit my ideas of melodic expression. I liked the 540 Radius body concept but made a few changes to make it even more comfortable to hold. The compound fretboard radius was essential to what I was trying to achieve. That took months of trial and error to figure out. The techs at Ibanez, Steve Blucher at DiMarzio and San Francisco luthier Gary Brawer helped me every step of the way. We played with fret size, potentiometer values, high pass filters, pickups, etc. Eventually, this prototype allowed me to play melodies with extreme detail. It responded to even the smallest touch from my fingers.

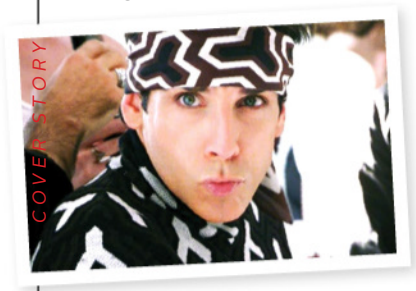
Do you still own this guitar?

Yes, I do. However, after it was stolen in San Francisco during a short tour with Steve Miller, then

purchased back from the thieves, it lost some of its mojo — and its artwork! The thieves rubbed off all the original art in an effort to disguise it. I re-illustrated it a few times since then, and it's still in my collection, but I don't play it much these days. I've made further improvements to the JS line that reflect a better functioning of the instrument.

Do you recall anything about this shoot?

Is this me doing my best "Magnum" or "Blue Steel" look? I remember this shoot because of my hair styling, which was more a result of desperation than choice. It was an evening session in Hollywood at Neil Zlozower's studio, where we shot the inside cover for *Flying in a Blue Dream* and *The Extremist*, and countless other photos. Neil is a force of nature; he always pulls something new and iconic out of you during his loud, raucous photo sessions. At one point my hair stopped cooperating and I just brushed it off my forehead, gave this funny look to Neil and he snapped the photo. We all laughed and agreed, "That's the shot!"



2. NOVEMBER 1993

Guitar World

Original photographer: Michael Sexton

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?

The guitar I'm holding was my favorite Donnie Hunt-illustrated JS named "Blue Donnie." He painted it after I asked him to try using larger characters and fewer colors. Donnie was a wild, inspired artist who painted anything and everything in his environment. He painted a lot of my stage clothes for the first few tours I did as a solo artist.

Why did you bring this guitar to the shoot?

Since I knew the cover concept before the shoot, I thought that these two absolutely delicious tracks that Joe had sketched, with quasi-finished parts. And they're just so great. So we went back and forth on various arrangement concepts. Then he sent me the sessions with his solos in them. Oh my goodness. That's a handful, I'll tell you that. It's amazing. Then there's also one track that I kind of put together. Overall, I'll just say that at this age, our true idiosyncrasies are really shining in the music. And I think the fans are going to love these tracks. They're very "Joe and Steve."

Steve, this may be the first time you're releasing music together, but it's not the first time you've recorded any. Supposedly, there's a two-track demo that you cut together as teenagers, after you had been taking lessons from Joe for 18 months. You guys called the recording "Reflections on a Year and a Half."

VAI: [*to Satriani*] Should I talk about that?

SATRIANI: Yeah, yeah, sure. Why not?

VAI: Well, I was taking lessons and I would walk into Joe's room — and it was the coolest teenage Long Island bedroom ever, because it was festooned with huge rock 'n' roll posters and beautiful stacks of vinyl, with Jimi Hendrix's *The Cry of Love* usually at the front. And Joe's Kustom amps — the ones with the kind of packing around the enclosure — and curly cables, which are always fascinating. But he had this two-track reel-to-reel recorder, and that was the first time I was exposed to anything in the world of engineering or recording or capturing music. And Joe explained to me, "Well, you can record something on one track and then overdub on another track..." I mean, that was like heaven in a cup. So in one of my lessons, Joe fired up this reel-to-reel. He had this riff, I had been playing for about a year and a half, and we recorded this thing. Just two kids in a bedroom. And it was a really cool, kind of interesting, hard riff.

SATRIANI: I think that was a Sony two-track I had?

VAI: Yep, it was. Go forward probably 15 years after that, Joe sent me the little reel and he said, "Look what I found." And it was the recording. I transferred it to digital,

CBS VIA GETTY IMAGES (BEN STILLER'S BLUE STEEL) FUTURE (GW COVERS)

"JOE GOES, 'STOP. GO HOME. DON'T COME BACK UNTIL YOU KNOW THE NOTES. AND THANK YOU VERY MUCH — I'LL TAKE YOUR MONEY'"

and it just sat on the shelf for many, many years. Until now. When the idea came to work on new music together, one of the tracks that Joe sent me has a part in it that is a chord progression that we used to jam over endlessly when we were kids. We'd go into his backyard and sit back-to-back for four, five, six hours and just play. It was the most amazing, engaging musical experience I can remember. And one of the chord changes we used to play on, Joe incorporated it into one of the new songs. So then I said, "I have this tape. What would happen if I took this and started to build something out of it?" And that original recording is part of the contribution to the song I'm constructing.

SATRIANI: It's amazing. It absolutely blew my mind. As soon as I heard the riff, I remember telling Steve, "Oh, I remember that!" I was fascinated with the intervals and trying to figure out how to play something like that. And of course, after I heard it again I picked up the guitar and I was like, "*What*?" It's a really weird riff.

VAI: It's obtuse. And you know, when I listen to the original tape I still don't know who's playing what. But I would assume that Joe's playing the riff, because I don't think I was capable of doing anything like that back then. [*Laughs*]

Joe, what was it like having Steve as a student?

SATRIANI: Well, my perspective on it is probably so different from his, as it is with all my students. When they come to me with recollections they remember things very clearly, and I rarely remember what they remember. I tend to remember a musical and a personality profile more than specific moments or individual lessons. But the most important thing I remember about Steve is that there was a connection really early on, on a couple of levels. One that I can't really put into words, but just feeling really close to somebody that you're meeting for the first time. The other was a really important lesson to have as a young guitar player — and something you don't want to really think about when you're a teenager and dreaming of becoming a rock star — which was having some little kid come in and totally blow you away, where pretty soon you're

Donnie's *Day of the Dead*-inspired artwork would fit right in. It was perfect! Seeing those skeleton figures on the body really helped sell the photo.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?

Oddly enough, I can't remember what I used it on in the studio. I started every *Flying in a Blue Dream* tour show with it, and it figured into *The Extremist* and *Time Machine* tours.

What do you love about this guitar?

The guitar looked and played great. It was one of those rock-solid guitars that never seemed to need an adjustment. It had a very balanced tone as well, not wild or hot, just even and balanced.

Do you still own this guitar?

Unfortunately, it is currently stolen. We came back from a short tour in the mid-Nineties only to find it had been nicked from our storage locker at the San Rafael, California, facility that Metallica would ultimately take over. I would really like it returned, please!

Do you recall anything about this shoot?

This cover was fun to shoot, and maybe a bit creepy, too. I was cool with the idea that I was representing the end of "shred," even though we all knew it wasn't true. But I'd never had to pose "dead" before! The alternate fold-out "Not!" cover was a fun idea, but if you look at who else is featured in the issue you get a good sense of what was happening at that time. Lead guitarists were taking a lot of flak for being,

well, lead guitarists! “Pay no attention to trends and just do what you believe in” — that’s my credo.

STEVE VAI

3. MAY 1988
Guitar World
Original photographer:
John Livzey

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?
VAI: A production prototype of the Ibanez Jem77FP. The positioning of the fabric pattern on the body is somewhat unique because Ibanez was still working on the positioning variants for the production guitars. The black area around the pickup selector is indicative of my earliest florals. Bonus note for JEM nerds: it originally had a “wrist rest” installed — like the earliest run of original JEMs — before it was withdrawn due to a patent dispute with Kahler. Pads for the wrist rest are visible either side of the trem.

Why did you bring this guitar to the shoot?
Because it was new. And also because this shoot had a dual purpose as marketing collateral for Ibanez and the launch of the floral JEM, which came out after the initial Loch Ness Green, Shocking Pink and Desert Sun Yellow models.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?
It appears in the [*David Lee Roth*] “Just Like Paradise” video, along with the original Red Heart triple neck. It’s unlikely it was used on a recording. A different prototype floral was used on the *Skyscraper* tour [*with Roth*].

What do you love about this guitar?
I have always felt that the floral

going, "Oh, man, this kid's got more than I've got." [*Laughs*] That's what it was like with Steve. I mean, I'm still struggling with that riff in "Reflections [on a Year and a Half]." It's not getting any easier!

Steve, you've said that at one of your first lessons with Joe, he actually sent you home.

VAI: Yes. And trust me when I tell you this was probably one of the most powerful, transformative events in my life, because it wasn't just a simple surface-level kind of a suggestion. It went very deep. And Joe probably has no idea how deep. But we have a tendency to create identities for ourselves based on what the world is telling us about ourselves. And when I was young and going to school, I was never very sharp or bright in academics, you know? So I never really felt I had the ability to memorize things. I didn't want to do anything except play the guitar. But I went to this one lesson and Joe said, "Memorize every note on the guitar. And when you come back, you've gotta know it."

It's interesting, because when I was leaving his house, in the back of my mind was this old belief: "You're not gonna do that. You *can't*. You don't have the retention or the intelligence to memorize all those notes and know them immediately." It was a disbelief in myself. So then I went back for my lesson the next week, and I hadn't learned the notes. I sit down, and Joe goes, "Stop. Go home. Don't come back until you know the notes. And thank you very much — I'll take your money." Which is another absolutely necessary thing that I needed to understand. [*Laughs*] And I still remember on my lesson sheet from that day, he wrote, "If you don't know your notes, you don't know sh--!" That's the way he wrote it: S, H, space, space, exclamation point. And then a little picture of a dagger.

SATRIANI: [*Laughs*] The dagger part... I mean, can you imagine if a teacher did that today?

VAI: But like I was saying, that experience was transformative. I remember on the walk home from Joe's house I had an epiphany: "You are never, ever going to step into that house again until you know your lesson so hard." And also, "You can do it. Why do you think you can't? Of *course* you can memorize the notes. As a matter of fact, you're gonna know the notes so cold that you're never going to forget 'em." It was a complete reversal of my perspective of myself. And that flowed into everything that happened in my life afterwards. I know it sounds like a lot, but it was that memorable.

"FANS WILL SEE SOMETHING THAT WASN'T REALLY REPRESENTED AS MUCH IN-DEPTH BEFORE: US PLAYING ORGANIZED, WRITTEN LINES THAT AREN'T JUST SIMPLE MELODIES"

What we've been talking about here is the forming of a deep bond between two musicians. Jumping forward a bit, you recently wrapped a short G3 tour, which recreated the initial lineup from 1996. Joe, when you conceived the G3 idea in the mid-Nineties, it came out of the desire to foster more of those types of bonds within the guitar community, correct?

SATRIANI: Yes. Nowadays we have the internet, we have social media. But the idea behind G3 came from the fact that things were very antisocial, I suppose, in our world. That was my perspective, at least. There was a lot of competition, a lot of back-stabbing, a lot of stupid, old-school entertainment rules that were keeping guitar players away from each other. I noticed that there wasn't any camaraderie at all. And I said, "Well, there should be."

I think that's what Steve and I were thinking about when we were kids playing in my backyard. We thought, "This is gonna be great when we've got a few more of us, and we're all traveling around the world, playing on stages, having a great time showing each other how to play this, that, and the other thing." But it didn't happen that way. We wound up on our separate islands, protected by our labels and managers, and nobody was playing together. Also, I think the styles of rock music that were popular in the early Nineties didn't really help solve that issue at all. So I started to feel like, "Hey, maybe we should formalize something that guitar players feel is a safe, fun place not only for them, but for the audience that loves this stuff. Where we can have fun with the guitar and celebrate it, rather than compete with it." That was really at the heart of G3. And it took some convincing because, you know, the Nineties were the Nineties.

Do you feel that the guitar community is in a better place nowadays?

SATRIANI: Now it's fantastic, because so many players have a venue. As a matter of fact, every player has their

JEMs are the best-sounding JEMs. Something about the fabric bonded to the body somehow gives the guitars a certain resonance.

Do you still own this guitar?

No. It's unclear what happened to it. Probably given away — or stolen.

Do you recall anything about this shoot?

It was photographed by John Livzey in Los Angeles and later used by Ibanez as the classic "High Priest of Guitar" poster. Other photos from the shoot appear in the article.

4. JANUARY 1990

Guitar World

Original photographer:
Neil Zlozower

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?

This is the second Ibanez Universe prototype. I named this guitar "Bodhi," and its collection number is SV84. Interestingly, this guitar has "Jem" on the headstock, because this was made before the "Universe" name was decided on. It was taken on the Whitesnake tour as a spare, and at some point my tech, Stan Schiller, covered the guitar in adhesive green dots purchased from Office Depot. The larger dots eventually fell off the body, but smaller dots remain stuck to the pickguard.

Why did you bring this particular guitar to the shoot?

Probably because it was a brand-new guitar at the time of the shoot. Most Whitesnake-era cover photos were this guitar, or the white UV eventually given to Prince.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?
The first prototype seven-string was used on the Whitesnake record. This black Universe seven-string is the second prototype, and I have used it on virtually every recording I've played a seven-string on throughout my catalog. It's my go-to seven-string.

What do you love about this guitar?
This guitar is my favorite-sounding Universe in my collection. It also has the thinnest neck of all my Universe guitars. It's friendly to play, and just seems to be one of those instruments that came together by the stars.

Do you still own this guitar?
Absolutely, and I still use it.

Do you recall anything about this shoot?
Shot by Neil Zlozower in Hollywood. I wore these pants quite a bit during the *Passion and Warfare* sessions. The shoot also included photos of me and this guitar with a Harley-Davidson chopper.

JOE SATRIANI & STEVE VAI

5. APRIL 1990
Guitar World
Original photographer:
Neil Zlozower

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?
VAI: I'm using one of the first [*Ibanez*] Universe UV77MC multicolor swirl prototypes.
SATRIANI: That's one of two original Ibanez JS chrome guitars. It's probably around the time I had just received them. Eventually I got a third one. The one in the photo

own venue. It's a total democracy out there, and it's so easy for players to interact with one another. If you spend 24 hours on social media checking out every guitar player from every corner of the world, your mind will be blown. And hopefully it won't make you give up. Hopefully you go, "I'm inspired now." Because, really, what the internet is telling us is that everyone is an individual and everyone has something unique to say. So you should take it all as encouragement.
VAI: It's hard for a lot of people to understand what it was like before the internet — even though it's like yesterday to us — but the whole infrastructure of the music business was completely different. You had to spend a lot of money on renting a studio to record. You had to have a label interested in investing in you and releasing your music. You had to have agents that were willing to book you based on promoters taking a chance. These days, you can release your own music. You can build your own story. If you have the wherewithal, you can be completely independent. It's really wonderful the way it's changed. And as a result of that, you've got people who are sitting in their bedrooms motoring away, and then uploading videos and allowing all of us to bear witness to what's possible on the instrument. And that's encouraging and inspiring.

What I would also love to see happen, because there's one aspect that's missing from that, is the personal, intimate connection with another musician in the moment. I would love to see technology evolve to the point where it's as easy to enter that space with somebody else as it is to just sit alone. Because there's a big difference between sitting alone or connecting with somebody. But I think that's on the way.

Here's a "Joe and Steve" question: Do each of you have a favorite song from the other?
SATRIANI: Oh, wow. [*looks at Vai*] What was the first tape that you sent me? What was it called? It was the one that had "Garbage Wrapped in Skin" and all that stuff on there. This is before [*Vai's 1984 debut solo album*] *Flex-Able*. I loved that.
VAI: I had, like, a little bossa nova drum machine that [*Frank*] Zappa

"WE'VE WRITTEN THE MUSIC, WE'RE GETTING IT RECORDED, AND THEN ONCE IT'S RECORDED, WE'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO PLAY IT"

gave me, and I didn't know what I was doing. I would just hang a mic in front of the [*speaker*] cabinet. I was fascinated with the idea that I could go *woo woo woo woo* and then hear it back. It was nasty stuff.
SATRIANI: You would feel dirty after listening to this stuff! [*Laughs*] But then you'd go, "How crazy is this person to create this soundscape?" It was like stepping into an insane film, you know? It was so inspiring to see Steve get into that space, to be able to create a world. And of course he refined it, and then he made it beautiful. But it's hard to pick just one song. There's "For the Love of God" [*from 1990's* Passion and Warfare], which is such a monumental piece of music. And I'm really into the most recent album [Inviolate], because it's so expansive — in addition to the three-necked beast that he plays on it. When Steve was sending me little video clips of him in the studio playing the Hydra, in my head I could see the little 12-year-old kid sitting in my bedroom taking his lessons. And then I thought, "Yeah, this makes sense. I totally expected this!"

How about you, Steve?
VAI: Oh, there's so many tracks of Joe's that I love.

There's a side of me that just loves listening to anybody play guitar, regardless of the proficiency, and then there's the critical side of me that listens to guitar players with the same ears that listen to, you know, Jeff Beck and Allan Holdsworth. I'm checking out form, intonation and style. But the thing that always resonates with me, no matter what, is inspired melody — melody that comes from a place that's unique and intimate to its creator. And this is Joe's world. He's always been so eloquent in expressing his real musical intentions. I equate him to Tom Waits, in a sense. Tom is just my favorite artist, and it's because he creates these atmospheres, and every element of the atmosphere works within the overall picture. Joe does the same thing. Completely different tools, obviously, but similar outcome.

With that in mind, the song of Joe's that I'll mention is "Cryin' " [*from Satriani's 1992 album,* The Extremist]. Just for the way that melody is so touching. You don't need those Matteo Mancuso-like chops to get the point across, you know? The melody, and the way Joe plays it, it's just sublime. I get lost in it every time I hear it.

Turning our attention back to the upcoming Satch-Vai tour, what can fans expect to see that they haven't seen before from you two?

SATRIANI: Well, for starters, we're going to be performing original music together, which is something we haven't really figured out as far as the staging part of it. But, you know, if we build it, it will come. And that's kind of like the way I'm looking at it. We've written the music, we're getting it recorded, and then once it's recorded, we'll figure out how to play it. Then once we know how to play it, we'll figure out where it goes in the show, and so on and so forth. But I never worry about those details beforehand. Because then you wouldn't do anything.

As far as the staging goes, I envision Joe's bedroom circa 1972 — the posters, the *Cry of Love* would be number one, the one we call Chrome Boy. This was the really early days of the JS model, and so we were still toying with the kind of wood we were using, the pickups, everything was changing really fast. And it was also only the second time, I think, that I was out touring as a solo artist. So I was really coming to grips with how to do an instrumental guitar show and what kind of gear I needed for it.

Why did you bring this particular guitar to the shoot?

SATRIANI: This was really my first attempt to figure out how to chrome a wood-body guitar. And there were issues with it. With one of them, we couldn't stop the chrome from buckling up off the wood. It was a really big problem, because it was dangerous. You rubbed your skin against it, it would just rip your hand open. But I had this guitar, and Ibanez wanted me to play it so I could give them feedback.

VAI: It was new and eye-catching. Many promo images for [*Vai's 1990 album*] *Passion and Warfare* featured this guitar. The guitar has faded considerably since the shoot.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?

VAI: It was used here and there on *Passion and Warfare*, and it appears on the album's cover with the handle airbrushed out. And the reason the one on the cover doesn't have the handle was because we were going to offer it as a production model, and the production model didn't have the handle. So we took it out of the photo. The guitar also appears in Whitesnake's "Fool for Your Loving" music video.

SATRIANI: I've used Chrome Boy continually. I toured with it for a very long time. It was maybe after [2001's] *Live in San Francisco* that I stopped. I think the second chrome guitar, the one I called Pearly Gates, because it had Pearly Gates pickups in it, was stolen right around that time. And so I decided to not bring out the Chrome Boy anymore. It became the home guitar at that point.

What do you love about this guitar?

SATRIANI: It looked really cool, and I was very excited about it.

VAI: It was bold and colorful, and launched the Ibanez Universe seven-string into the public's consciousness.

Do you still own this guitar?
SATRIANI: Yes, absolutely.
VAI: No. I gifted it to [*pre-teen guitar prodigy*] Thomas McRocklin in 1990, as a thank-you for his appearance in the video for "The Audience Is Listening."

What do you recall about this shoot?
SATRIANI: It was the *Flying in a Blue Dream* period for me, and *Passion and Warfare* for Steve. So it was perfect timing for us.
VAI: Shot by Neil Zlozower at his studio in Hollywood.
SATRIANI: When I'm looking at that cover, in my head I can hear Neil yelling at me, "Satriani, why'd you bring that damn chrome guitar? That thing's gonna screw up my lens!" [*Laughs*]

6. OCTOBER 2007

Guitar World

Original photographer:
Travis Shinn

What model guitar are you playing in this photo?
VAI: "Shapes," the first Ibanez JEM equipped with True Temperament frets, received in 2007.
SATRIANI: That's the JS1200. I had a red '66 Fender Electric XII, and I took a picture of it and sent it to Ibanez. I said, "Can we get something that's like that, but a little different, a little updated?"

Why did you bring this particular guitar to the shoot?
VAI: Like many photo shoots, I brought one of the newest and most interesting guitars that recently arrived at my studio.
SATRIANI: The 1200 would have

vinyl, all of it.
VAI: That's right! Do the whole thing — us sitting back-to-back, using curly cables and Kustom amps.
SATRIANI: I'll have to get a wig...
VAI: [*Laughs*] But the new music is one of the things I'm looking so forward to. Because I think the fans will see something that wasn't really represented as much in-depth before, and that's us playing organized, written lines that aren't just simple melodies. I mean, there's some simple melodies, of course, but really, we're going to have to sharpen our teeth on playing these beautiful tapestries together. And that's different from, say, G3. The G3 shows are fantastic, but they're more about the communicative back and forth. This is more like our DNA fused together.

Since those days in Joe's Carle Place bedroom you've both accomplished so much in your respective careers. And as we're seeing now, you're still trying new things. Where does that desire to continue exploring with your instrument and your music come from?
VAI: I think it's built into us by universal design — to want to achieve, to want to explore, to want to expand. The creative impulse in humans is very powerful, and it has a momentum to it. I know that for me, that has never gone away. I used to create lists and lists of projects I wanted to do, and I remember when I turned 50, I looked at this list and I realized there were maybe 150 projects on it. And each one of them takes two years, you know? And I was like, "Okay..." I realized that as long as I'm enjoying what I'm doing in the now, then all will be well. So that's what I continue to do.

And that's also keeping in mind that, through time, there's changes. Especially with elite athletes, virtuoso musicians, what have you, there's certain limitations. I know I've experienced some physical things over the years. But still, within any parameter you can explore the infinite. Even if you have one finger, it's all there. So with that attitude, I've learned to adjust, but go deeper. That's always been my goal, and it continues to be.

"IT'S HARD FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE BEFORE THE INTERNET — EVEN THOUGH IT'S LIKE YESTERDAY TO US"

How about you, Joe?
SATRIANI: I maybe noticed my physical limitations quite early on. [*Laughs*] But one thing I really took to heart was what I learned from Bill Westcott, our mutual music theory teacher at Carle Place High School. Bill was the one who said to me, "You know, when you're 18, 19, it may turn out you're not really very gifted, physically,

on the instrument. But it doesn't mean that your brain can't keep developing until you're 80 years old." He said, "That's what you should be training — the musician up here [*points to his head*]. Then your hands will follow." That's really hard for a teenager to understand, because at that time in your life it's all body, you know? It's just hormones and flesh and blood. And then someone says, "No, don't pay attention to your body — think!" [*Laughs*] It took a while, but I realized Bill was so right-on with that.

VAI: Bill was totally brilliant. So much of what I learned about music theory was fed by Bill, but at the time I wasn't applying it to the guitar. Joe was taking the same class from the same teacher, and he was able to apply this musical information to his instrument.

SATRIANI: What I discovered through that was that composing was the thing I liked the most. As much as I liked playing, I *really* liked writing music. I was intrigued with harmony. I was dead-set on turning it upside down, and playing chord progressions that no one had thought of, and breaking the rules of, you know, 18th-century counterpoint and everything else. But that wasn't going to come from my fingertips or what size pick I was using. It was going to come from how my brain was going to interpret my feelings about what I wanted to express musically. That's a really long game to play. To embark on that journey of composing is the longest game ever. Because it keeps going. And as Steve said, it may turn out you've just got one finger left, but you can still write the greatest thing ever. So that's been my focus right from the beginning. The rest of it is just fun. And also annoying, because I'm 67 now and I still play arpeggios exactly the same way now as I did when I was 17. There's been zero progress. Zero!

VAI: Oh, I don't know about that. [*Laughs*] You should hear *you* through *my* ears. GW

been kind of new at that time, too. But it's not unusual for me to bring two or three guitars. I would usually bring a white one, a black one and a red one, because you never know what looks the best.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?

VAI: I don't recall. In some ways it was a proof of concept for further guitars that would receive True Temperament necks, including both EVO and FLO [*two of Vai's Ibanez JEM models*] for a time. I took this guitar with me to road-test on the 2007 *Sound Theories* tour.

SATRIANI: It would have been probably around [*2010's*] *Black Swans and Wormhole Wizards*, that period, when I was using this guitar. And I used it live extensively. But the guitar had 22 frets, and eventually I went up to 24. So 2010 would have been when I stopped using it as a tour guitar because of that. I had too many songs that needed 24 frets. Because if you put 24 frets on a guitar, you're gonna use 'em.

VAI: Guitar players are like that. You give them 10 pedals, they'll step on all of 'em eventually!

What do you love about this guitar?

VAI: Improved tuning all over the neck!

SATRIANI: It had the [*DiMarzio*] PAF Joe pickup in the neck position, which allowed me to do more melody and solo playing in the neck position when I had a lot of distortion. Because I found that most pickups there got a little boomy. Which was okay for an eight-bar solo or when you played clean. But increasingly my gig got stranger and stranger — I just played melody/solo, melody/solo for, like, three hours a night. So we started to think about, well, what pickup would service that better?

Do you still own this guitar?

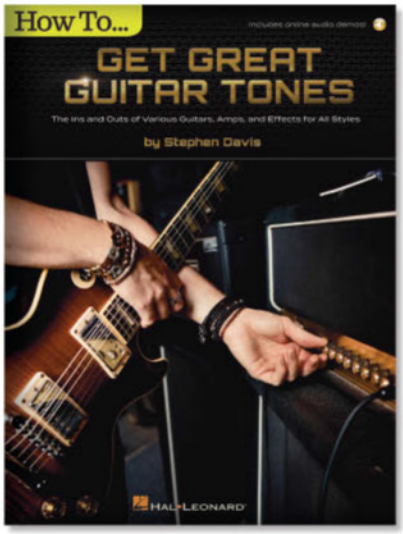
VAI: Yes.

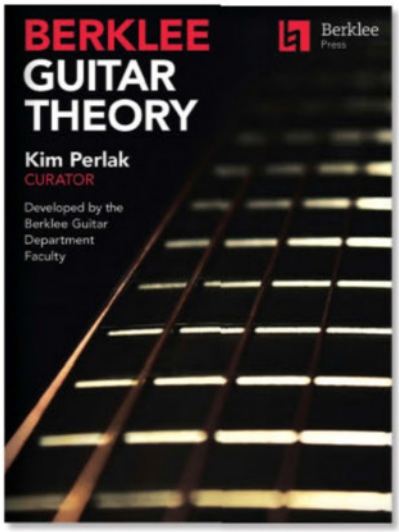
SATRIANI: I do. I think it may be the only 1200 I have.

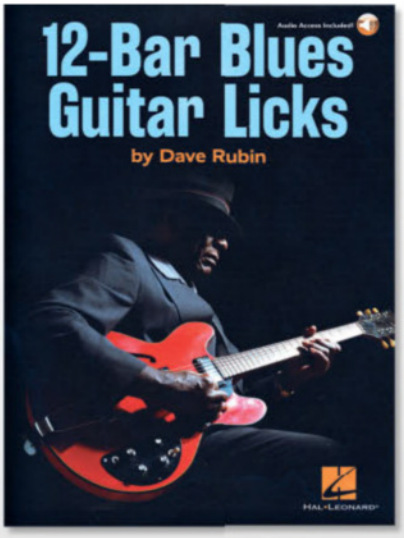
Do you recall anything about this shoot?

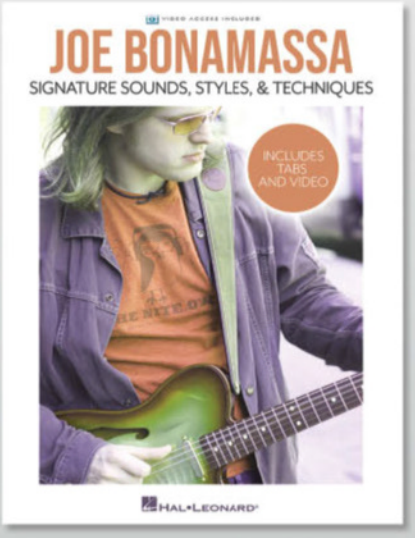
SATRIANI: I remember people started saying I looked like Voldemort. [*Laughs*]

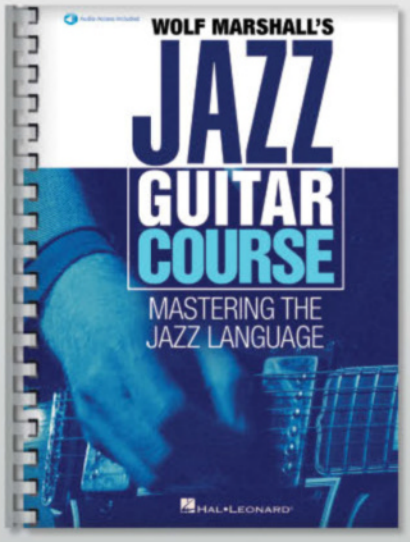
NEW GUITAR TITLES FROM
HAL LEONARD

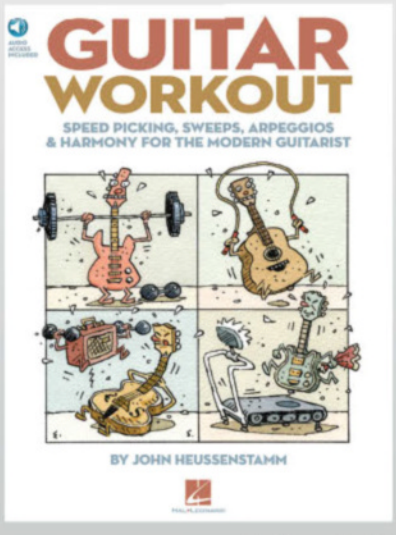












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Lerxst CHI head and CHI 1x12 cabinet

By Chris Gill

ALEX LIFESON AND Mojotone joined forces back in 2012 to produce the first Lerxst amplifier — the limited edition 25/50-watt OMEGA head — based on the Marshall Silver Jubilee amps that Lifeson used during the recording and touring cycles for Rush's *Clockwork Angels* album but featuring several circuit modifications, parts upgrades and hand-wired construction. The 15-watt 6V6-driven Lerxst CHI combo followed shortly afterwards in 2015, offering a more affordable, lower-powered variation of the OMEGA.

This year Lifeson and Mojotone have significantly expanded the Lerxst lineup to include special edition and regular production OMEGA amps, the Limelight guitar, the By-Tor Boost/Drive pedal and the new, more powerful 30-watt CHI combo plus a CHI amplifier head. Many Lifeson fans will likely consider the new CHI the ideal Goldilocks "just right" amp out of the Lerxst lineup thanks to its club- and studio-friendly output and more wallet-friendly price. We tested the CHI head along with a matching CHI 1x12 extension cabinet.

Like the OMEGA, the CHI features a two-channel design with shared EQ section based upon the Silver Jubilee, but the power amp section's 6L6 tubes give it a different overall tonal and performance personality than the OMEGA and Jubilee's EL34 tubes, with less dominant mids, brilliant treble, crystalline presence,

biting attack, more clean headroom and more dynamic, less compressed responsiveness when pushed into overdrive.

Controls consist of Presence, Bass, Middle and Treble EQ that are shared by both channels, Output Master to control overall volume (also including a push/pull channel switching function), Input Gain with a pull diode "rhythm clip" setting and Lead Master volume for adjusting the lead channel's output. An included footswitch also can be used for channel switching. A single ¼-inch input jack, power switch (no standby) and "Starman" logo power indicator round out the front panel features. Rear panel jacks include a ¼-inch footswitch jack, serial effects loop mono send and return jacks (-10dB instrument level) and 16/8/8-ohm speaker output jacks.

A Mojotone Greyhound 8-ohm 12-inch speaker is loaded in the 1x12 CHI cabinet. This is an oversized cabinet that measures 24 x 20 x 9 inches (width x height x depth) and features an open-back design that contributes to the CHI amp's more effervescent upper midrange and treble tones and less aggressive bass. It's built from Baltic birch with ¼-inch finger joints and is covered with Race Gray Tolex with a Red Garnet Levant center stripe that perfectly matches the CHI head's cosmetic appearance.

The CHI head's 30-watt output delivers ample volume levels for club and studio applications that won't blow out your eardrums. It may lack the full/half power functionality of the OMEGA head and Silver Jubilee's pentode/triode switch, but that's really not necessary as the amp delivers satisfying clean and overdrive tones at lower volumes.

I compared the CHI amp and cabinet to my personal 1988 Marshall Jubilee 2554 50-watt combo. While the gain character was often similar, especially with the Input Gain's "rhythm clip" gain engaged, the CHI actually sounded much closer to my late Seventies two-input Hiwatt 50-watt DR504 head, thanks to its chiming upper mids and overdrive characteristics that were more Hiwatt-like chunk and crunch than Marshall-style bark and growl. With a 335, Strat and an SG plugged into the head, I was able to dial-in tones that came damn close to Lifeson's late-Seventies/early Eighties sounds, especially with a PastFX Chorus Ensemble and/or an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress added to the signal chain. Thanks to the CHI's more airy and shimmering upper mids and treble, I also found that its clean tones matched nicely with classic chorus and flanging effects.

By modern amp standards, the saturation at maximum gain is somewhat mild. However, this means the tone never gets overly compressed, attack remains crisp and articulate and every note in a chord maintains definition and clarity. The bass is never dominant or flabby, which helps a guitar maintain a prominent voice in a band that doesn't get lost in the mix.

The CHI head and cabinet setup costs about $400 more than the CHI combo. The CHI combo is the same size as CHI 1x12 extension cabinet and weighs about three pounds less than the individual head and cabinet together, but it's much easier to haul and load a separate head and cabinet at a manageable 31 and 24 pounds, respectively, than wrestle with a beastly 52-pound combo.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE
$1,695 (CHI head); $695 (CHI 1x12 cabinet)
MANUFACTURER
Lerxst Amps, lerxstamps.com

PROS: A more affordable, lower-watt version of Alex Lifeson's acclaimed Lerxst OMEGA head; tones are actually a better match for Lifeson's peak late Seventies/early Eighties classic Rush sounds; simple, straightforward controls make it easy to dial-in desired tones; very light weight.

CONS: Both channels share a single EQ section; lacks pentode/triode switch found on OMEGA amp.

THE BOTTOM LINE
Although the CHI's design is based on amps Lifeson used later in his career, the CHI sounds much closer to the iconic early Rush tones that most players would prefer to duplicate.

Yamaha Pacifica Professional P12M

For Paul's demo of this guitar, visit guitarworld.com/june2024

By Paul Riario

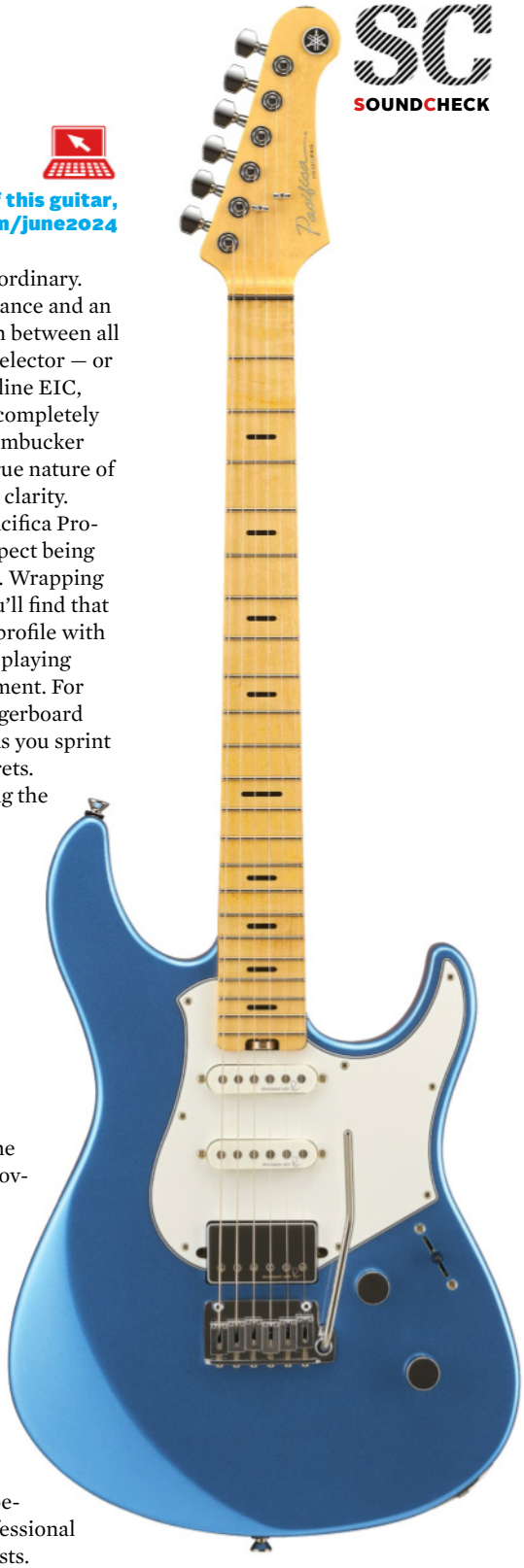
IF THERE'S ONE thing that's overshadowing the stellar Yamaha Pacifica Professional guitar, it's the startling price tag. It's difficult to shake the fact that the Pacifica — which many consider the benchmark in budget electric guitars — now arrives in a Professional version at a cost that might be slightly out of reach for most players. Even so, it would be a shame for that to be the only reason to overlook this thoughtfully designed Superstrat that undeniably proves it's a world-class performance instrument through and through.

The Pacifica model has been around for decades, but if you look back far enough, you'll find that its evolution was rooted as a pro-level, custom shop guitar that was built-to-order for top Los Angeles session players. So, in essence, Yamaha's Pacifica Professional is a welcome return to form as a premium instrument. If that sounds dubious, you can rest assured that the Pacifica Professional's build quality and specialized features are on par with top-notch boutique brands like James Tyler, Knaggs, Suhr and Tom Anderson.

First impressions are everything, and right off the bat, the guitar feels profoundly comfortable in your hands and rings out with a sizable resonance acoustically. A lot of that has to do with its precise Japanese craftsmanship and implementation of Yamaha's Acoustic Design technology — an advanced form of chambering that Brandon Soriano, marketing manager of the Pacifica line, elaborates on: "If you hear about chambering, you picture someone just taking chunks of wood out. This is different. We had scientists meticulously doing 3D modeling and mapping out how to shape the body and take certain parts out so that the whole thing resonates as freely as possible." And while this kind of exactness puts the Pacifica a cut above the rest, the perceivable standout comes in the form of the new Reflectone pickups in an HSS configuration (with a push-pull coil split at the tone knob). Yamaha partnered with Rupert Neve Designs, the company renowned for its pro audio recording consoles and preamps, to develop uniquely wound pickups that cover an exceptionally wide tonal response. The result is pickups unlike anything I've experienced before. Though it may sound like a fault, the Reflectone pickups lack coloration, but this is exactly what makes them extraordinary. What you get in return is supreme balance and an almost mastered, studio-quality polish between all the pickup positions on the five-way selector — or what Michael-Astley Brown, *GW*'s online EIC, called a "pre-produced sound," and I completely agree. It's the kind of fully realized humbucker and single-coil tones that reveal the true nature of your tube amp or guitar modeler with clarity.

Of course, playability across the Pacifica Professional is exceptional, with every aspect being tangibly optimized for a balanced feel. Wrapping your hand around the maple neck, you'll find that its comfortably rounded modern "C" profile with a custom-tinted satin finish puts your playing in a confident position for fluid movement. For speed, a flat 10-14–inch compound fingerboard radius keeps notes from choking out as you sprint through the neck's 22 stainless steel frets. Even the generous beveled scoop along the Pacifica's alder body's lower bout and contoured neck heel allow for effortless navigation from top to bottom. For hardware, the Gotoh 2-point tremolo bridge combined with Gotoh locking tuners is a premium inclusion for steady vibrato throw and steadfast tuning, and even the smooth taper of the chrome volume and tone knobs make the whole guitar feel deluxe. As far as looks go, I love that the Pacifica Professional embraces its Japanese provenance. The colorful finishes are based on album covers of the Japanese City Pop genre that's inspired by the California music scene, which makes the guitar pop in bold colors.

In closing, some critics might say there's a stigma to it being a Pacifica; however, I'll counter that Yamaha's Revstar was a hidden gem until Matteus Mancuso adopted it as his primary guitar. Whether or not it takes a Mancuso to change that perception is irrelevant, because, for my money, the Pacifica Professional is an unparalleled instrument at all costs.



CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $2,199.99
MANUFACTURER: Yamaha, usa.yamaha.com

PROS: Japanese-made; advanced chambering design maximizes the guitar's resonant qualities; Rupert Neve Design Reflectone pickups offer an ultra-wide and clear tonal response; slim modern C neck shape and compound radius provide comfort and pitch-perfect bending; stainless steel frets will last for a lifetime of durability; rosewood or maple fingerboard options; colorful finishes.

CONS: Expensive.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Yamaha Pacifica Professional is the most sophisticated Pacifica to date. It's a flagship model with advanced chambering to enhance resonance, and cutting-edge pickups for a super clear and ultra-wide response that put it beyond any guitar in its class.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE:
295 Euros
MANUFACTURER:
Endorphin.es,
endorphines.squarespace.com

- **PROS:** Multiband EQ, compression and mid/side processing works equally well on single instruments or complete band mixes; simple, straightforward design; stores three presets; immaculate professional studio sound quality.
- **CONS:** More limited effectiveness in mono applications; firmware update requires computer with a headphone output jack.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** The Endorphin.es Golden Master's multiband EQ, compression and mid/side processing can dramatically improve the punch, dynamics and definition of guitar tones processed with multiple effects as well as the clarity and three-dimensional effect of a stereo soundfield.

Endorphin.es Golden Master Multiband Mastering Processor pedal

By Chris Gill

ONE OF THE greatest benefits of the increasing power of digital technology is how it has made the sound of high-end studio processors both more affordable and convenient in compact stomp box formats. Most studio-quality processors that have made the transition to stage-worthy stomp boxes are devices like compressors and EQs that are typically used while tracking or mixing, but with the new Golden Master Multiband Mastering Processor pedal Spain's Endorphin.es has brought sophisticated mastering technology to the stage as well.

Typically, mastering is the final stage of the recording process where the entire stereo mix is polished and perfected. The Golden Master pedal can certainly be used that way on a band's live stereo mix, but its multiband EQ, compression and mid/side processing are also very effective for providing individual instruments like keyboards/synths, bass and guitar (particularly if the guitar is processed with several different effects in stereo) with a polished studio "sheen." Think of it as the "dude's rug" of effects — something that really ties the overall sound together.

The Golden Master separates audio into three distinct frequency bands with approximate crossover points at 300Hz and 3kHz: Low (20Hz to 300Hz), Mid (300Hz to 3kHz) and High (3kHz to 20kHz). A Mode button allows users to select mid/side, compression and EQ sections with adjustable parameters controlled by the Low Band, Mid Band and High Band knobs. The three individual Low, Mid and High Band knobs provide -20dB band isolation/+8dB boost in EQ mode, 50ms to 14ms attack/1500ms to 150ms release/1:125

to 1:4 ration/-12dB to -20dB threshold in compressor mode, and centered stereo (narrower/mono spread) to normal stereo to side stereo (wider spread) in side/mid mode.

Other controls include a Threshold knob for adjusting the threshold level of the compressors for all three bands at once, master Volume and Input Gain knobs, individual Mute buttons for each band that can also isolate the compressor on a single band to facilitate dialing in desired settings, and a button for switching between input and output VU meter LED monitoring. Two footswitches are providing for switching effect on/off bypass and scrolling through three presets. Jacks consist of pairs of ¼-inch inputs and outputs for true stereo and a ¼-inch expression pedal input that can be set either to control EQ with an optional expression pedal or operate as an audio input for sidechain processing.

Just like how mastering is done at the end of the production process after tracks are recorded and mixed, the Golden Master is best used at or towards the end of the signal chain. Unlike typical EQ and compression pedals that are typically used to shape or define a guitar's core tone prior to modulation effects, reverb, and so on, the Golden Master Multiband Mastering Processor works best to refine the sound of a guitar's tone complete with effects processing. And while you can certainly use it in mono, the Golden Master optimally works its magic within a stereo soundfield which takes advantage of its side/mid mode multiband processing.

For one of my tests I created a complex sound using high-gain metal distortion pedal, stereo analog chorus, stereo delay and stereo reverb pedals with the Golden Master placed at the end of the signal chain going into the input of a pair of amps dialed to clean tones. With the low band's compressor set to a "heavy" 1:4 ratio and Mid/Side dialed fully counterclockwise to a centered/mono setting, the bass instantly sounded more focused and powerful. By boosting the mid band's EQ and dialing Mid/Side to the middle for normal stereo, the mids allowed the overall guitar tone to become more prominent in a mix with bass, drums and vocals. With the high band's Mid/Side control set fully clockwise, the stereo spread sounded notably wider and more three-dimensional and the guitar tone's overall clarity was dramatically improved.

THE SPECS

- **CONTROLS:** Volume, Threshold, Input Gain, Low Band, Mid Band, High Band
- **SWITCHES:** VU in/out, Mode, Low Band Mute, Mid Band Mute, High Band Mute, Bypass footswitch, Preset footswitch
- **JACKS:** Input L, Input R, Output L, Output R, Expression/Sidechain, 9VDC center negative barrel

Buzz Bin

EarthQuaker Devices Zoar Dynamic Audio Grinder

By Paul Riario

WHAT THE HELL is a Zoar? One quick Google search reveals it was a Biblical city — and that the name roughly translates to "little" or "insignificant." Now, I don't believe the folks at EarthQuaker Devices are biblical scholars; nor do I believe they intended to create a "little" or "insignificant" dirt pedal. But I'm pretty sure — judging by the illustrated hairy creature with claws of doom on the pedal's face — you're gonna need the Zoar Dynamic Audio Grinder when you're down on the killing floor.

EQD has been firing on all cylinders in sonic saturation with the recent releases of their Sunn O))) Life Pedal V3, Special Cranker and Blumes stompboxes that come loaded with colorful shades of fuzz, distortion and overdrive that can blow the roof off. And while the Zoar Dynamic Audio Grinder sounds like a gnashing, bloodthirsty animal, EQD's description of it — and I'm paraphrasing here — as a "medium-high gain discrete distortion" that utilizes transistors and eschews opamps and diodes to impart more viable touch-sensitivity for players, all sounds very tame and nuanced to me. Still, compared to the other dirt devices in EQD's stable, the Zoar appears to have the most tone-shaping capability with its six-knob layout for Level and Gain, Weight and passive EQ set of Bass, Middle and Treble. It all seems familiar except for the Weight control, which introduces additional low-end content and body into the circuit. Moreover, Weight also shapes the characteristics of the gain structure depending upon the type of guitar pickups employed, and where you land with the rest of the five dials on its highly interactive control set. The Zoar comes pedalboard-ready with top-mounted jacks, red LED indicator, a silent Flexi-Switch and 9- to 18-volt operation; and beneficially, running the Zoar at 18 volts yields crisper dynamics, enhanced clarity and quicker response.

Armed with a '59 Les Paul Historic and a Hendrix Strat, I ran the Zoar through my arsenal of classic amps, including a Fender Deluxe Reverb, a Matchless DC-30 and a Marshall Jubilee. As I alluded to earlier, the Zoar is less of a feral distorted beast and more of a domesticated drive with a broad range of fattened boost, crunchy speaker breakup and muscular distortion. Touch sensitivity is spot-on; whether you're heavy-handed or have a soft touch, your pick attack is accentuated dramatically. As far as the amount of gain found on the pedal goes, it's only after 3 o'clock on the Gain knob that the Zoar becomes crisply distorted and approaches fuzz (if you dial back the passive EQs), and if you push it this far, it sizzles like an overdriven Fender amp pushed to its limits. It's still a very detailed drive that doesn't get overly sludgy, and courtesy of its Weight control, you can add some walloping low-end punch to your tone. I also enjoyed getting the Zoar to sound very amp-like by cutting the Treble and boosting the Bass, Middle, Weight and Gain around 1 o'clock to achieve that wonderful base tone of a Marshall or Orange amp on steroids. In other words, the Zoar is a bit of a wild animal that's not overly ferocious; but it barks, it roars and it bites, and I'm keeping it as a pet.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $129
MANUFACTURER: EarthQuaker Devices, earthquakerdevices.com

PROS: Wide dynamic range of drive; from distortion to overdrive, fat boost to speaker breakup; crumbly grind to hi-fi fuzz; 9V and 18V operation; 18V offers quick response and clearer dynamics.

CONS: No battery operation.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The EQD Zoar Dynamic Audio Grinder is a dynamic distortion with amp-like character and an interactive EQ and Weight control that can sculpt varying degrees of boost, saturated overdrive and stabs of fuzz.

Boss Waza Craft BP-1W Booster/Preamp

By Chris Gill

WITH THE EXCEPTION of the limited edition TB-2w Tone Bender (which was anomalous in numerous ways), all of the previous Boss Waza Craft pedals were based on pre-existing Boss pedal models. The BP-1W takes a radically different approach by adopting specific elements of classic Boss and Roland products — in this case the preamp sections of the Boss CE-1 Chorus Ensemble and Roland RE-201 Space Echo — and reconfiguring them in the familiar Boss compact pedal format.

For years, the glorious, natural-sounding overdrive guitar tones that resulted from boosting the CE-1's level or RE-201's instrument volume control until the peak level LED constantly glowed bright red were a closely guarded tone secret. In fact, many guitarists used these devices for their preamps alone without engaging their respective chorus/vibrato or tape echo/reverb effects, such as John Frusciante (CE-1) and Jonny Greenwood (RE-201).

The BP-1W's analog circuitry provides the preamp tones of the CE-1 and RE-201 in a pedalboard-friendly format without the excessive bulk of those devices or impedance mismatch issues that are optionally resolved by placing a buffer before their inputs. The BP-1W also includes a Natural setting that provides a transparent/"clean"-sounding boost effect.

Whereas the original CE-1 and RE-201 preamps only had level controls, the BP-1W features both Level and Gain controls to allow users to sculpt overdrive textures with more precision. A Standard/Vintage buffer switch on the rear panel allows users to replicate the rolled-off brightness and more restrained dynamic response characteristics of the original low-impedance, unbuffered preamps (Vintage setting).

There isn't an EQ control, but that's basically the point. These preamps are so well regarded because they deliver natural, organic-sounding enhancement of guitar tone. The RE setting boosts lower midrange to provide more body and heft, while the CE setting accents upper midrange and rolls off the bass slightly for sparkling, glassy treble shimmer with rich harmonic overtones. The Natural setting is satisfyingly transparent, retaining the rig's overall tonal character while making everything sound bigger and bolder with as much or as little added overdrive grit and grind as one desires.

With the Level and Gain controls fully maxed, the overdrive texture is delightfully aggressive and gritty, but it never becomes flat or compressed. Attack remains razor-sharp and note-to-note definition is precise. The tone cleans up but retains body and punch when the guitar's volume knob is backed down. Although the RE and CE settings aren't 100 percent transparent, they all sound quite natural, organic and flat-out good regardless of the guitar/amp rig the BP-1W is used with — an attribute very few overdrive pedals possess.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $169.99
MANUFACTURER: Boss, boss.info

PROS: Provides three distinct preamp tones with natural, organic character and expressive dynamics; the Buffer switch's Vintage setting duplicates the darker, less dynamic character of original low-impedance CE-1 and RE-201 preamps; pairs well with a wide variety of guitar/amp rigs.

CONS: No EQ control (although the inclusion of one arguably would be in conflict with this pedal's overall design and purpose).

THE BOTTOM LINE
The BP-1W is particularly effective for delivering the full-bodied character and responsive dynamics of an amp cranked up to its sweet spot, but at manageable volume levels for the stage, studio or practice.

IN DEEP
by Andy Aledort

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2024

THE ALBERT/JIMI/STEVIE SHUFFLE

Laying solos deep into a shuffle groove

IN THE LAST few columns, we explored an effective approach to strengthening our sense of groove and time, for both rhythm and lead playing. The first part of the exercise entails devising a repeating riff, or vamp, that establishes the groove. The second part is to solo over that groove with an ear towards locking into the rhythm part as solidly as possible.

All our previous examples have been four bars long. Now, our rhythm part will be a 12-bar blues shuffle, over which I'll then improvise a solo. This rhythm part has a pronounced triplet feel and is in the key of E, along the lines of Albert King's "Can't You See What You Are Doing to Me." You'll hear the same groove and a nearly identical riff in Jimi Hendrix's "Jam Back at the House," also known as "Beginnings," as well as Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Wall of Denial." Therein lies the progression of this type of groove, as Albert's tune inspired Jimi, who in turn inspired Stevie.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the rhythm part. Following a one-beat pickup on the bottom two strings, with the notes C♯ to E, bar 1 starts with an open low E note followed by an upbeat accent on an E9 chord. The chord is hit on another upbeat accent on beat 2 and is then sounded again on beat 3. On beat 4, a partial barre across the top three strings at the 7th fret slides up to the 9th fret. Bar 2 is identical, except for beat 4, wherein the C♯-to-E pickup is recalled, followed by repeat of bars 1 and 2.

Bars 5 and 6 of the progression introduce the IV (four) chord, A7, and bars 7 and 8 reprise the E9 pattern. Bar 9 sounds the V (five) chord, B7, followed in bar 10 by the IV chord, and the 12-bar form concludes with two bars back on the I chord, E9.

FIGURE 2 presents the solo played over this form. Like the rhythm part, it starts with a one-beat pickup, C♯-E-C♯, followed by licks based on the E blues scale (E, G, A, B♭, B, D) played in 5th position, shifting down to 4th position at the end of bar 1. The groove of this riff is based on a variation on three eighth notes per beat, as two 16th notes are sounded on the second eighth note triplet on every beat. This rhythm carries through to the beginning of bar 2. The lick in bars 2 and 3 is similar to Stevie's "Wall of Denial" main riff.

Bar 4 is based on a well-known bass line that can be heard on Hendrix's "Jam 292." Bar 5 features sliding 6ths over A7, followed by oblique bends. On the return to the E9, the open high E string is used as a drone. Through all these licks, strive to lay the solo lines deep into the shuffle groove "pocket."

Bars 9 and 10 feature a triadic Freddie King-style lick over B7 and A7, and the solo wraps up with 1st-position Lightnin' Hopkins-style licks in E.

FIG. 1

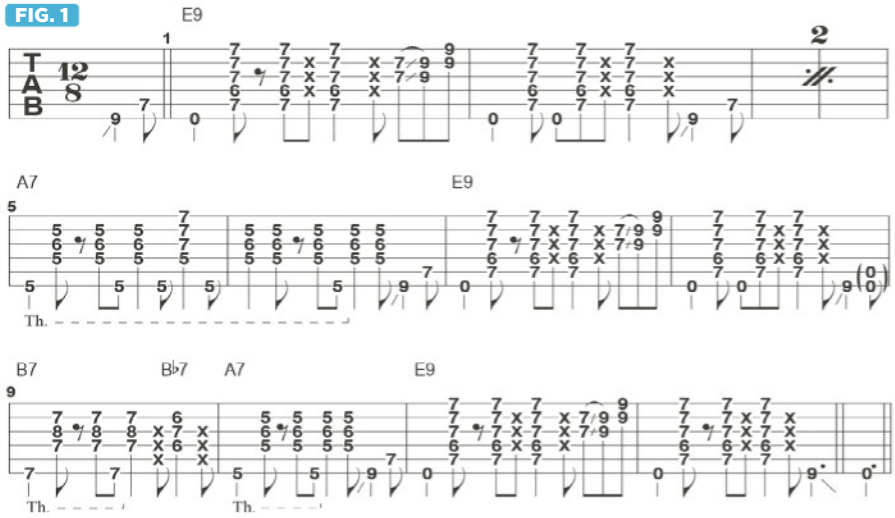
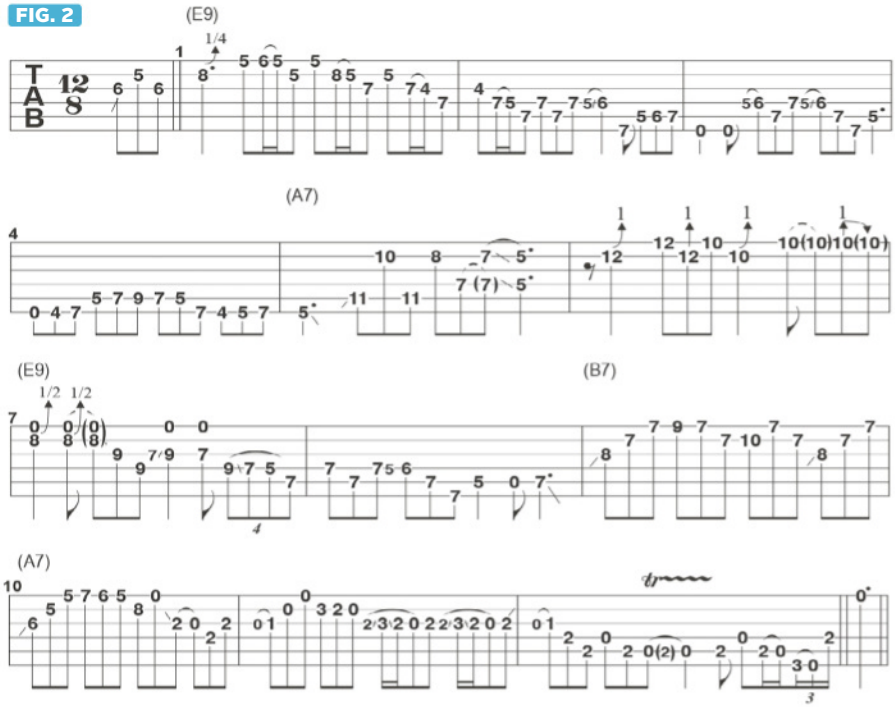


FIG. 2



Andy Aledort's 2024 album, *In a Dream*, can be found on all streaming platforms and is also available for download from longsongrecords.bandcamp.com

ALISON HASBACH

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2024

THE KING'S THING

The genius of Albert King

ON MY LATEST release, *Blues Deluxe Vol. 2*, I covered the Albert King classic "You Sure Drive a Hard Bargain." My guitar of choice for the recording was a 1967 Gibson Flying V in Sparkling Burgundy.

I once had the pleasure of having an audience with all three of Albert King's main Flying V's: his 1959 Korina V, which is the guitar he used to record "Blues Power" at the Fillmore West; his early Seventies custom-made Dan Erlewine V, which has Albert's name inlaid in the fretboard; and his 1967 cherry red Flying V. The '67 V may be less well known than the other guitars but it's equally important, as rumor has it that Albert used this instrument to cut "Born Under a Bad Sign," "Crosscut Saw" and many other songs.

Warren Haynes once said, "Albert King was the most immaculate blues guitar player because no one played like him before, and everyone played like him after." I totally agree. You can't listen to Albert and say, "He got that lick from T-Bone Walker," because his sound and style are completely unique.

It may have been of some consequence that Albert was originally a drummer and can be heard on drums, credited as Albert Nelson (his birth name) on recordings with Jimmy Reed. Along with his innate sense of melody, Albert's sense of rhythm is perfect.

Albert's great signature as a soloist was his use of string bending, especially "overbends" beyond a whole step. For our version of "Hard Bargain," I used a few specific approaches to emulate his sound. Played in the key of B, with licks based primarily on B minor pentatonic (B, D, E, F♯, A), bar 1 of **FIGURE 1** features E, 1st string/12th fret, bent up a whole step to F♯. I then shift down to 7th position to finish this "Albert approved" phrase.

In **FIGURE 2**, I begin in the same position, but starting on beat 4 of bar 2, I shift up to 12th position and play two-step bends from D on the B string's 15th fret. Notice how I catch the G string under the bending finger here, resulting in double-stop bends. **FIGURE 3-5** offer more examples of these kinds of Albert-style bend licks. Notice the "stepped" bending at the end of bar 1 into bar 2, as I combine half- and whole-step bends on the notes D, E♭ and E.

When playing this way, I like picking the strings with my thumb, as Albert would primarily do. He also played "upside down" — his guitar was strung for a right-handed player, but he flipped it over and played it left-handed. As a result, the thin strings were near the top side of the fretboard. Because of this, he would pull them down to bend them, instead of pushing them, which produces a completely different sound.

Whenever I play a solo over a slow blues, I'll think, "What would Albert do?," which leads me to playing licks like those shown in **FIGURES 6** and **7**. **FIGURE 8** illustrates an approach to emulating Albert's style that was taught to me by the great Larry McCray, starting with the index finger fretting the G string and setting up the big vibratos on the B string, fretted with the ring finger.

FIG. 1

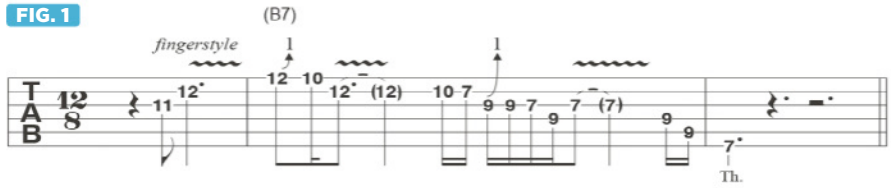
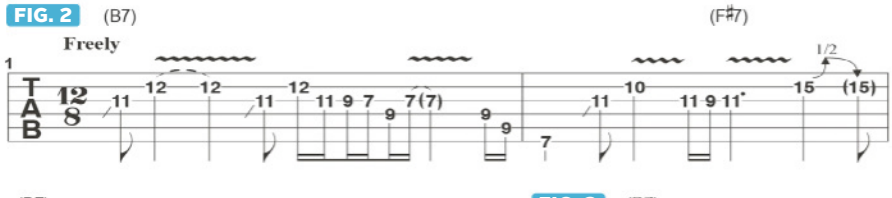


FIG. 2



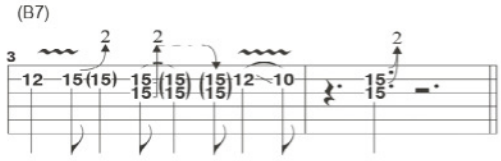


FIG. 3

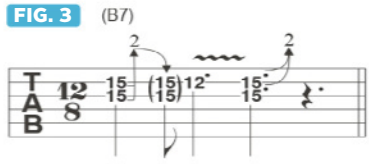


FIG. 4

FIG. 5

FIG. 6

FIG. 7

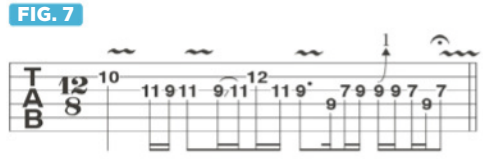
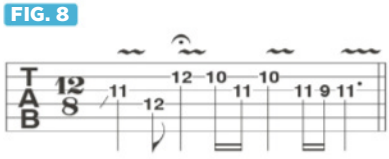


FIG. 8



Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and *de facto* ambassador of the blues.

JEFF FASANO/FUTURE

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2024

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

How to balance melody and technique, part 2

LAST MONTH, I broke down the first half of my 24-bar outro solo in "Ghost of You," from the 2006 Andy Timmons Band album *Resolution*. It's a fairly complex solo that requires attention to detail: there are some challenging passages built from long streams of 32nd notes, which are tempered by more melodic phrases articulated with precise string bending techniques like oblique bends and two-step "overbends." So let's get back to it!

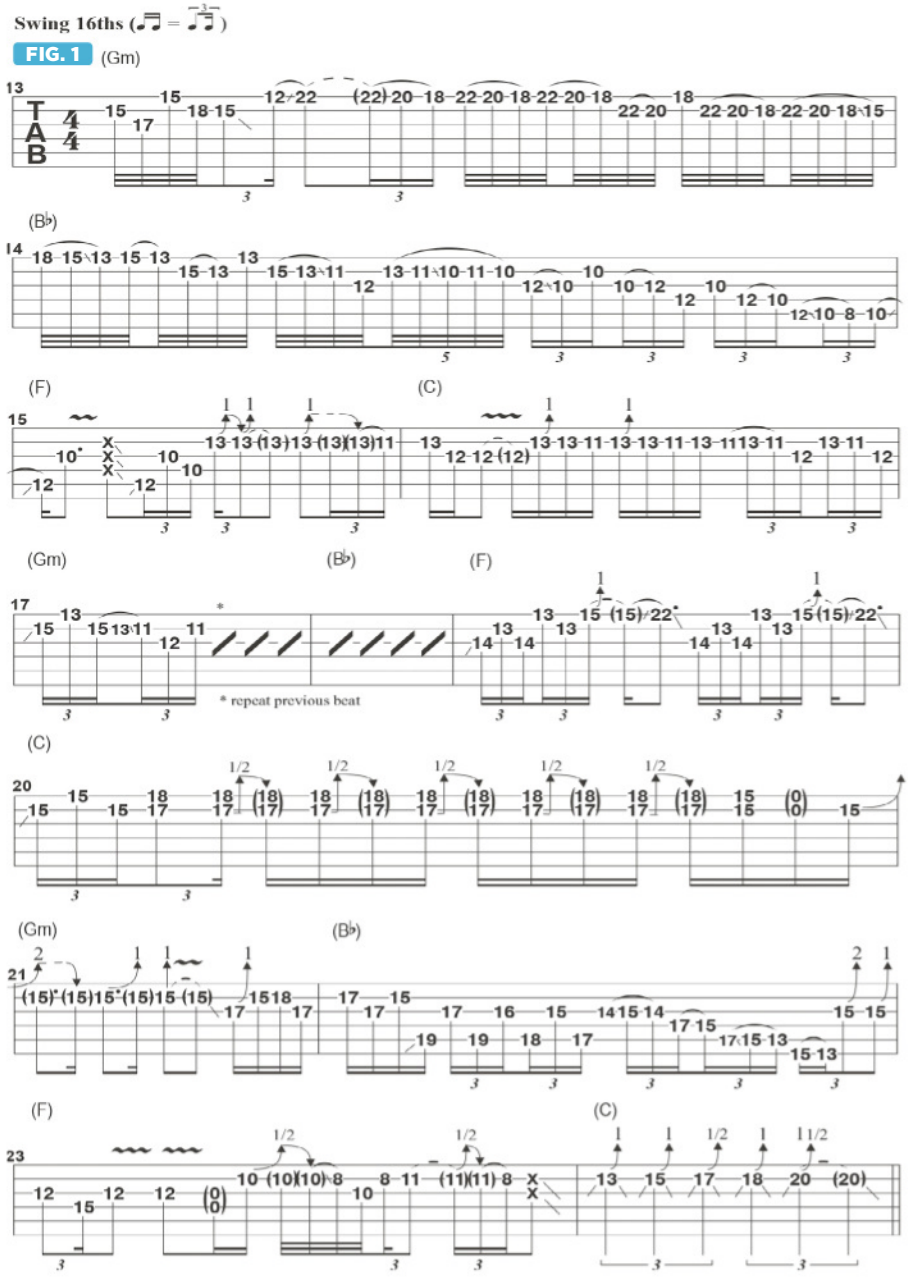
This month, we'll cover bars 13-24, shown here in **FIGURE 1**. As you recall, bar 12 ended with a fast, repeating phrase played up in 15th position and based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B♭, C, D, F), and that phrase "spills" into beat 1 of bar 13, the first bar of this example.

On beat 2, I slide my fret-hand pinkie all the way up to the high D note on the high E string's the 22nd fret, which on beat 3 initiates a fast descending phrase, played primarily in a rhythm of 32nd notes. This descending phrase is based on G minor pentatonic with the inclusion of the 2nd, or 9th, A, and continues for three full beats, all the way up to beat 3 of bar 2. At this point, the melodic sequences become more varied as they ascend and descend, albeit still very quickly with the rhythm of the lines switching to 16th-note triplets.

If you look closely at beat 3 of bar 2, you'll see that the "shape" of the triplet-based melody repeatedly starts with a note on the 10th fret, first on the B string, followed by the G and then the D string.

At bar 3, the chord progression moves to F, and I acknowledge that in the solo by sliding up to A, the major 3rd of F, and follow that with the other two notes of an F major triad — the root, F and the 5th, C. On beat 3 of this bar, I move back to blues-style licks based on G minor pentatonic, and in bar 5, I introduce a one-beat phrase built from slides and pull-offs, which I then repeat on each beat through bars 5 and 6.

At bar 7, the F chord reappears, and once again I reference it in the solo by playing through the notes of the F major triad, this time up in 13th position, an octave higher than the F major triad in bar 3. This in turn sets up another shift, up to 15th position,



and on the arrival of the C chord. I reference this with the notes B♭ and E, repeatedly bending and unbending the E note one half step (E to F). The presence of the B♭ note alludes to a C7 chord sound (C, E, G, B♭).

At bar 21, we return to the tonic, Gm, and here I begin a new phrase by overbending an F note up two whole steps to A. On beat 2 of bar 22, I play chromatically descending 6ths on the A and G strings, an idea I "borrowed" from Steve Lukather's solo in "Breakdown Dead Ahead." I then conclude the solo with repeating slides and bends that lead up to progressively higher notes.

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Check out his new instructional course, "The Art of Story Telling."

SIMONE CECHETTI

LIVE FROM FLAT V

by Josh Smith

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2024

ANSWERING THE CALL

More on "call and response" soloing

THESE PAST FEW lessons have all focused on a variety of the tools that I rely on to strengthen the narrative content in my guitar solos. Not note choices, but a wider view of the things that will help me to create better phrasing.

We've talked about repeating a melodic phrase over and over to build tension in a solo; about locking ourselves into a box and forcing ourselves to play in a single position, which I like to refer to as "handcuffs;" and last month we initiated our look into the device commonly referred to as *call and response*, whereby you play a phrase, listen to it and then answer it with a different phrase in a conversational way.

Let's say you've arrived in the middle of your solo, have already utilized all of these approaches and are now looking to push the boundaries even further. I find myself in this situation often: I normally play in a guitar-bass-drums trio, which allows me a lot of creative freedom to musically go wherever I like. So, when I'm three choruses into a solo, how can I continue to use these tools to keep things interesting?

My approach is to be aware of what's happening rhythmically, dynamically and phrasing-wise. Let's say I've played over the I (one) chord, A7, with the B.B. King-style lick shown in **FIGURE 1**. This lick is played in the 10th-position "B.B. box," with the A root note fretted with the index finger on the B string's 10th fret. I would answer this with something like **FIGURE 2**, which is essentially the same idea with a different ending.

When I hit the IV (four) chord, D7, one approach would be to answer both of those licks with something rhythmically similar but melodically different, as in **FIGURE 3**. Here, I've moved down to 5th-position A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G) and rely on differently phrased bends from D to E on the G string, demonstrated in bar 4. This phrase pushes the narrative along by introducing new rhythms and dynamics, as I change my pick attack and hit the strings harder. As the intensity increases, the "story" of the solo is developing. When I arrive at the V (five) chord, E7, I'd be prompted to play something like **FIGURE 4**. This lick starts with an aggressive phrase on the bottom strings, followed in bar 2 with ascending E♭dim7 voicings, which perfectly set up a resolution back to A7, and the turnaround to the V (five), E7, in bars 3 and 4.

When you listen to your favorite players improvise, sometimes it seems like you almost know what they're going to play next. This is because they play so conversationally that you can anticipate where the lines should go. **FIGURES 5** and **6** offer another example of presenting an idea and answering it in a sympathetic way.

Hey, this will be my last column for a while, as I am headed back out on tour. I'll be back soon. Until then, I hope to see you out on the road!

Triplet Feel ♫ = ♩³♪

FIG. 1

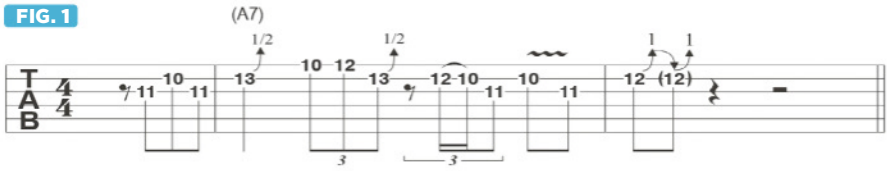


FIG. 2

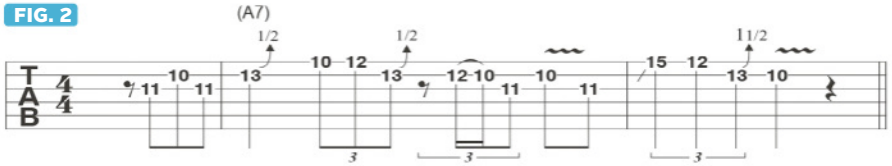


FIG. 3

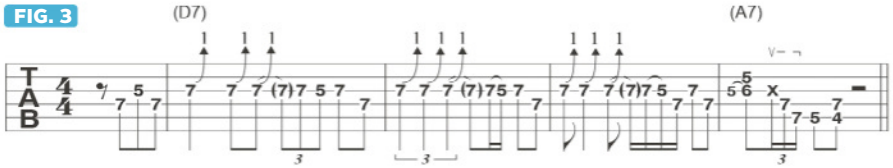


FIG. 4

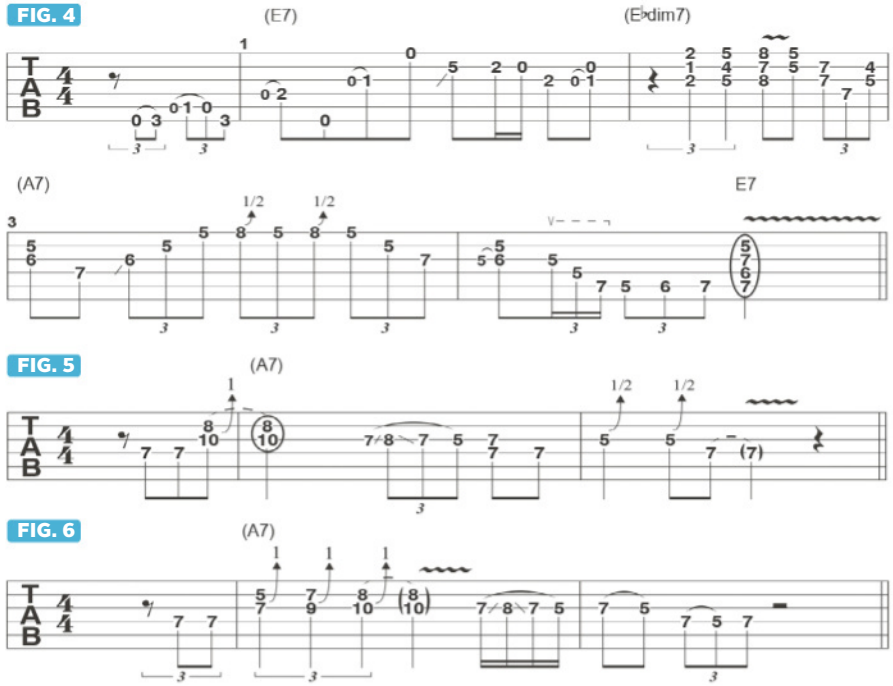


FIG. 5

FIG. 6

Josh Smith is a highly respected blues-country-jazz master and all-round tone wizard. His latest album, *Bird of Passage*, is out now.

OLLY CURTIS/FUTURE

"IT'S A MOOT POINT"

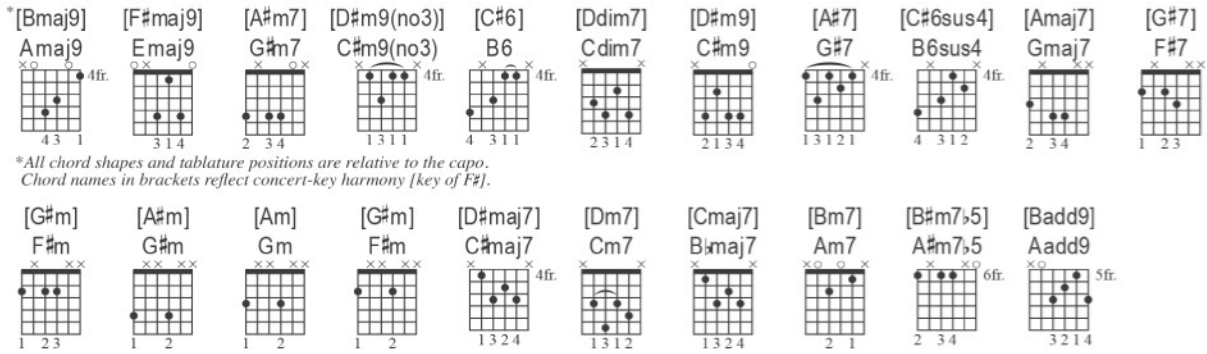
Melanie Faye

As heard on **MELANIE FAYE EP**

Composition by MELANIE FAYE • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

Guitars 1 and 3 are capoed at the 2nd fret.

chords for Gtrs. 1 and 3 (capo 2)



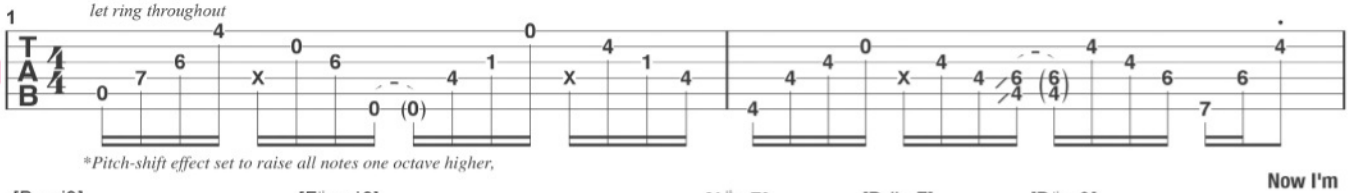
*All chord shapes and tablature positions are relative to the capo.
Chord names in brackets reflect concert-key harmony (key of F♯).

A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Slow ♩ = 75

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 [F♯maj9] Emaj9 [A♯m7] G♯m7 [D♯m9(no3)] C♯m9(no3) [C♯6] B6

*Gtr. 1 (clean elec., w/studio pitch-shift effect)
(fingerstyle)
let ring throughout

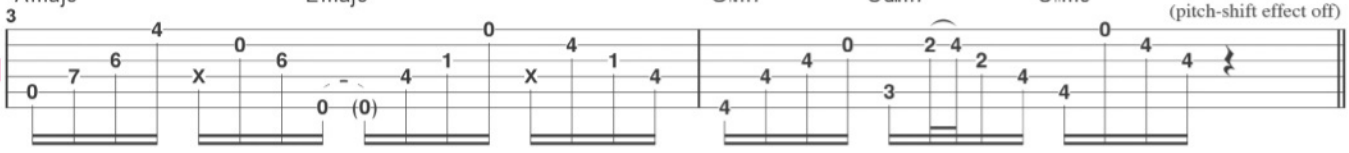


*Pitch-shift effect set to raise all notes one octave higher,

Now I'm

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 [F♯maj9] Emaj9 [A♯m7] G♯m7 [Ddim7] Cdim7 [D♯m9] C♯m9

(pitch-shift effect off)

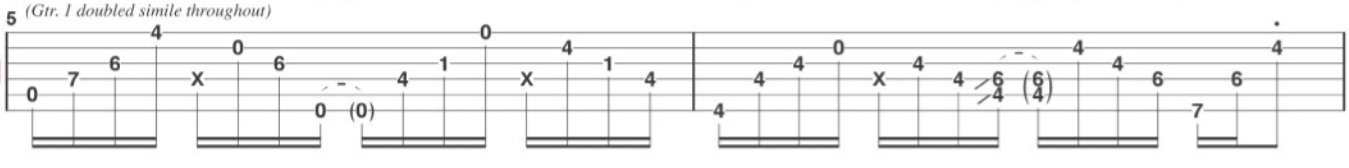


B **1st Verse** (0:13)

falling through the cracks of a

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 [F♯maj9] Emaj9 [A♯m7] G♯m7 [D♯m9(no3)] C♯m9(no3) [C♯6] B6

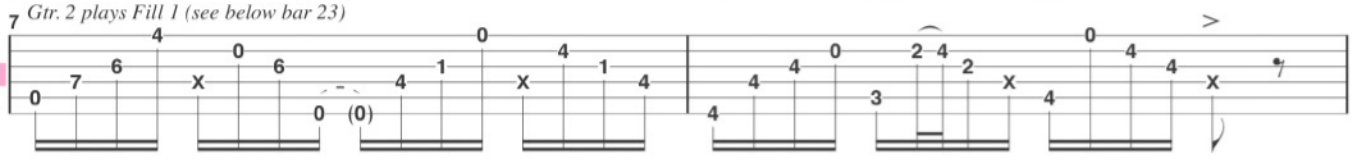
(Gtr. 1 doubled simile throughout)



never ending pavement drenched in black black black As I

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 [F♯maj9] Emaj9 [A♯m7] G♯m7 [Ddim7] Cdim7 [D♯m9] C♯m9

Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 23)



"IT'S A MOOT POINT"
COMPOSITION BY MELANIE FAYE
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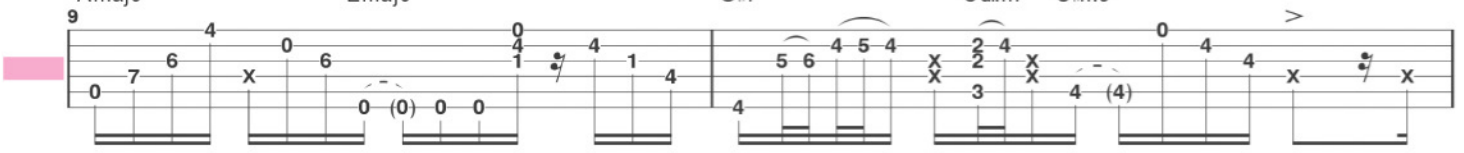
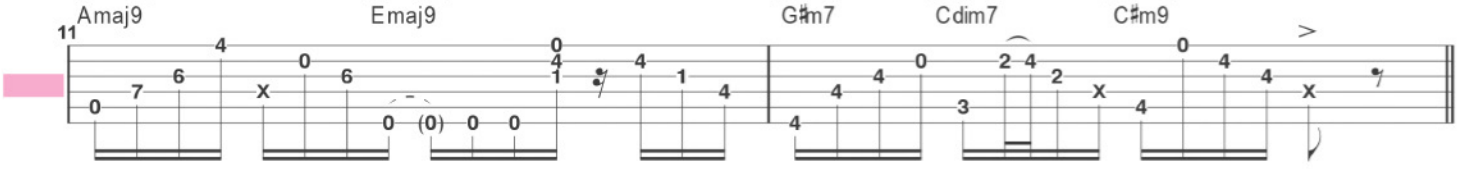
hold on foolishly to the

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]
Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯7 Cdim7 C♯m9



only thing that means everything to me

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]
Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 Cdim7 C♯m9



C **Chorus** (0:38, 1:42, 3:02)

1. Nuh dah dah dah dah
2. Oh oh
3. Oh oh

Don't cry Never wanna see tears in your eyes babe

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 C♯m9(no3) B6

Gtr. 1

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [D♯m9(no3)] [C♯6]

Bass (synth bass arr. for 4-string bass guitar)

1. Nuh dah dah dah dah
2. Nuh dah dah dah dah
3. Oh oh

Don't lie Give me one more chance babe and you're mine now

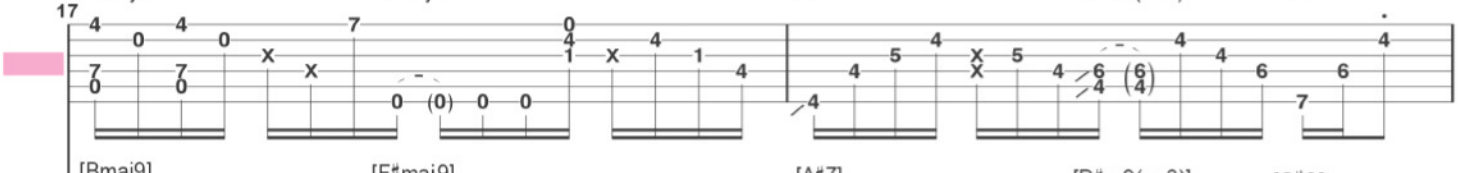
Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 C♯m9(no3) B6

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [D♯m9(no3)] [C♯6]

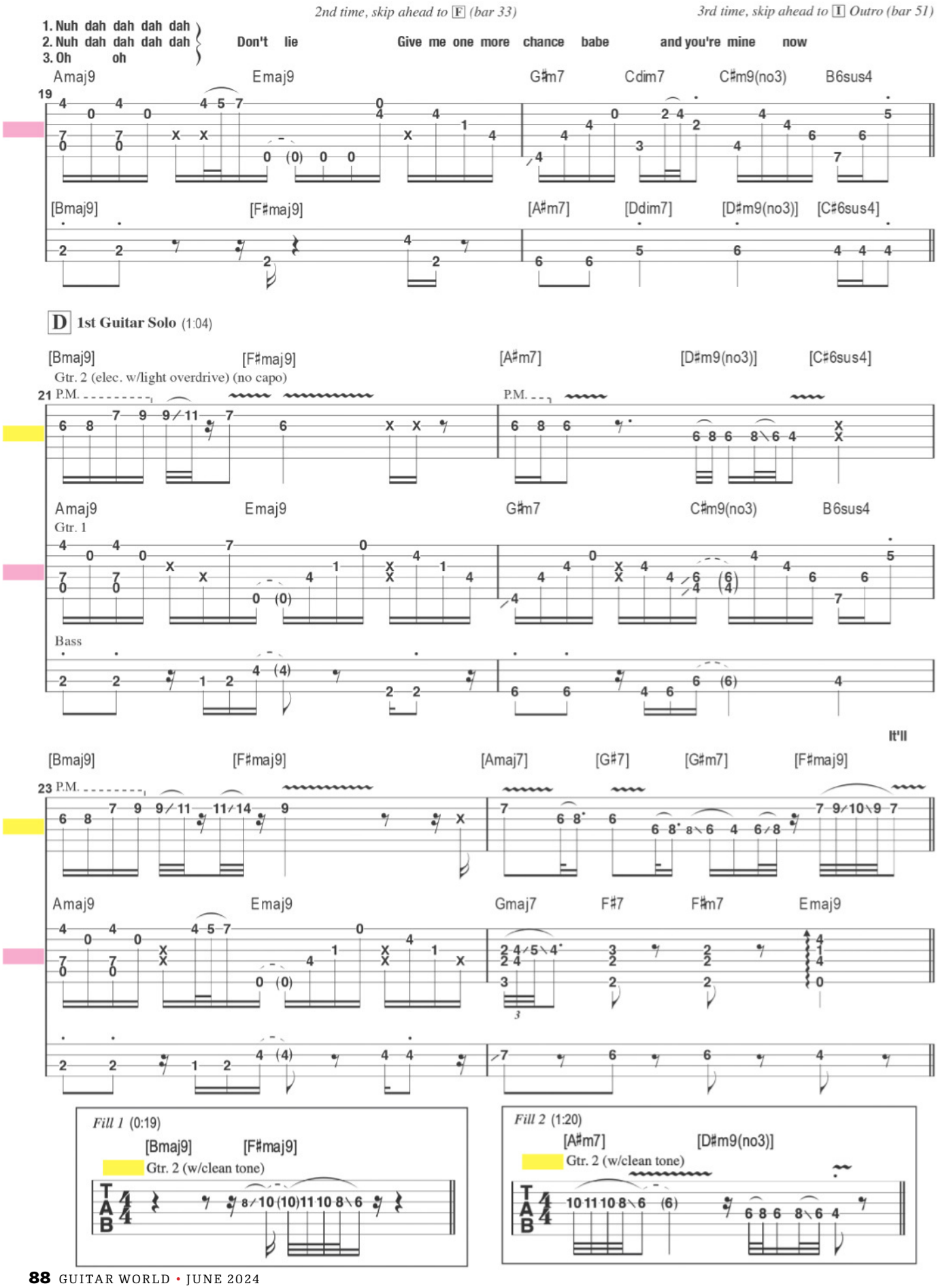
1. Nuh dah dah dah dah
2. Oh oh
3. Oh oh

Don't cry Never wanna see tears in your eyes babe

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯7 C♯m9(no3) B6



[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯7] [D♯m9(no3)] [C♯6]


2nd time, skip ahead to F (bar 33)
3rd time, skip ahead to I Outro (bar 51)
1. Nuh dah dah dah dah
2. Nuh dah dah dah dah
3. Oh oh
Don't lie
Give me one more chance babe
and you're mine now
Amaj9
Emaj9
G♯m7
C♯m9(no3)
B6sus4
19
[Bmaj9]
[F♯maj9]
[A♯m7]
[D♯m9(no3)]
[C♯6sus4]
D 1st Guitar Solo (1:04)
Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light overdrive) (no capo)
21 P.M.
Gtr. 1
Bass
It'll
[Amaj7]
[G♯7]
[G♯m7]
23
Gmaj7
F♯7
F♯m7
Fill 1 (0:19)
Gtr. 2 (w/clean tone)
Fill 2 (1:20)

E **2nd Verse** (1:17)

all pass they said But a

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 C♯m9(no3)

25 Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2 plays Fill 2 (see below bar 24)

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [D♯m9(no3)]

Bass

never ending darkness still remains my friend And I

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 C♯m9

27

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [D♯m9]

know it's but a dream Because to

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯7 Cdim C♯m9

29

Gtr. 2 plays Fill 3 (see below bar 59)

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯7] [Ddim] [D♯m9]

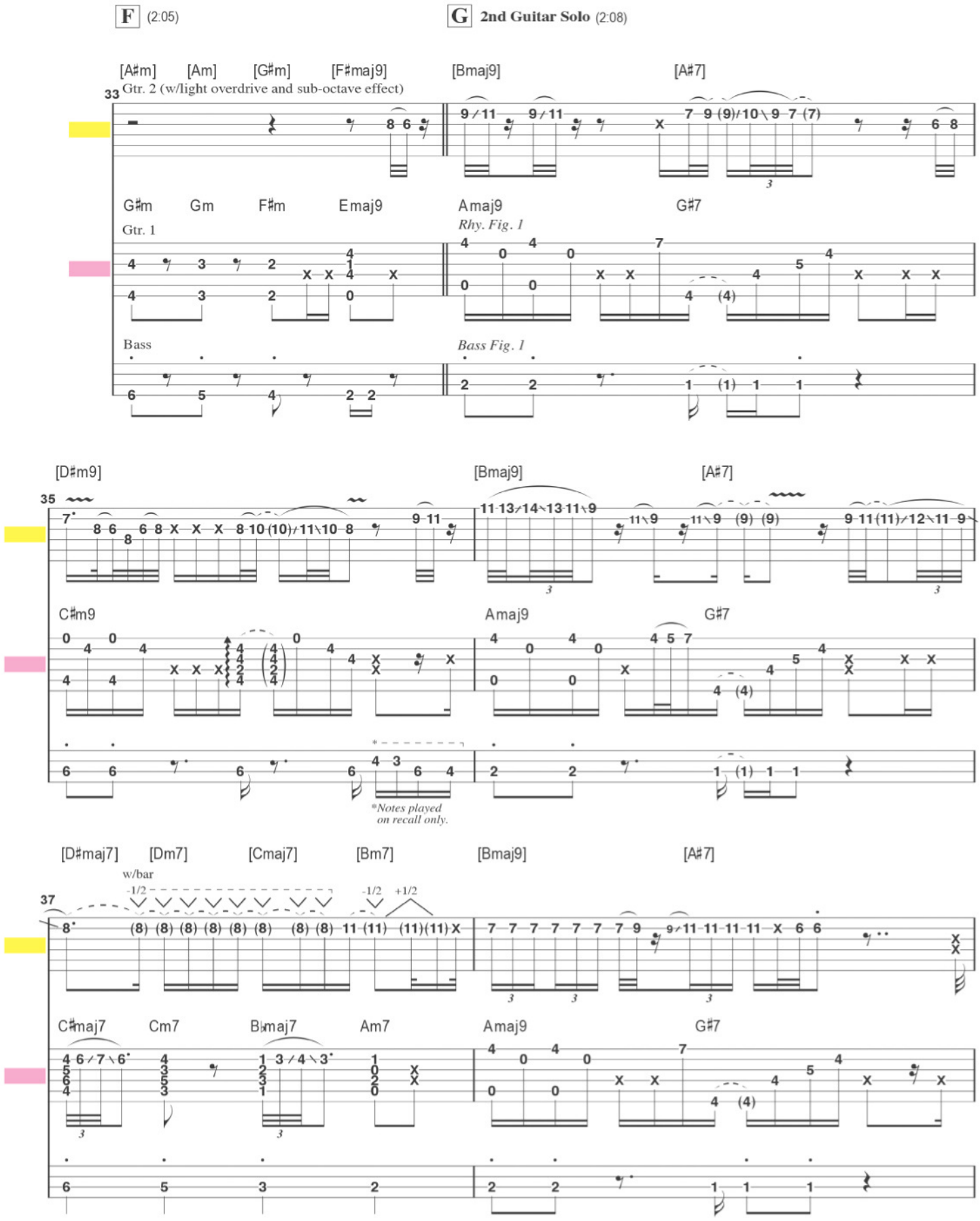
Go back to **C** *Chorus (bar 13)*

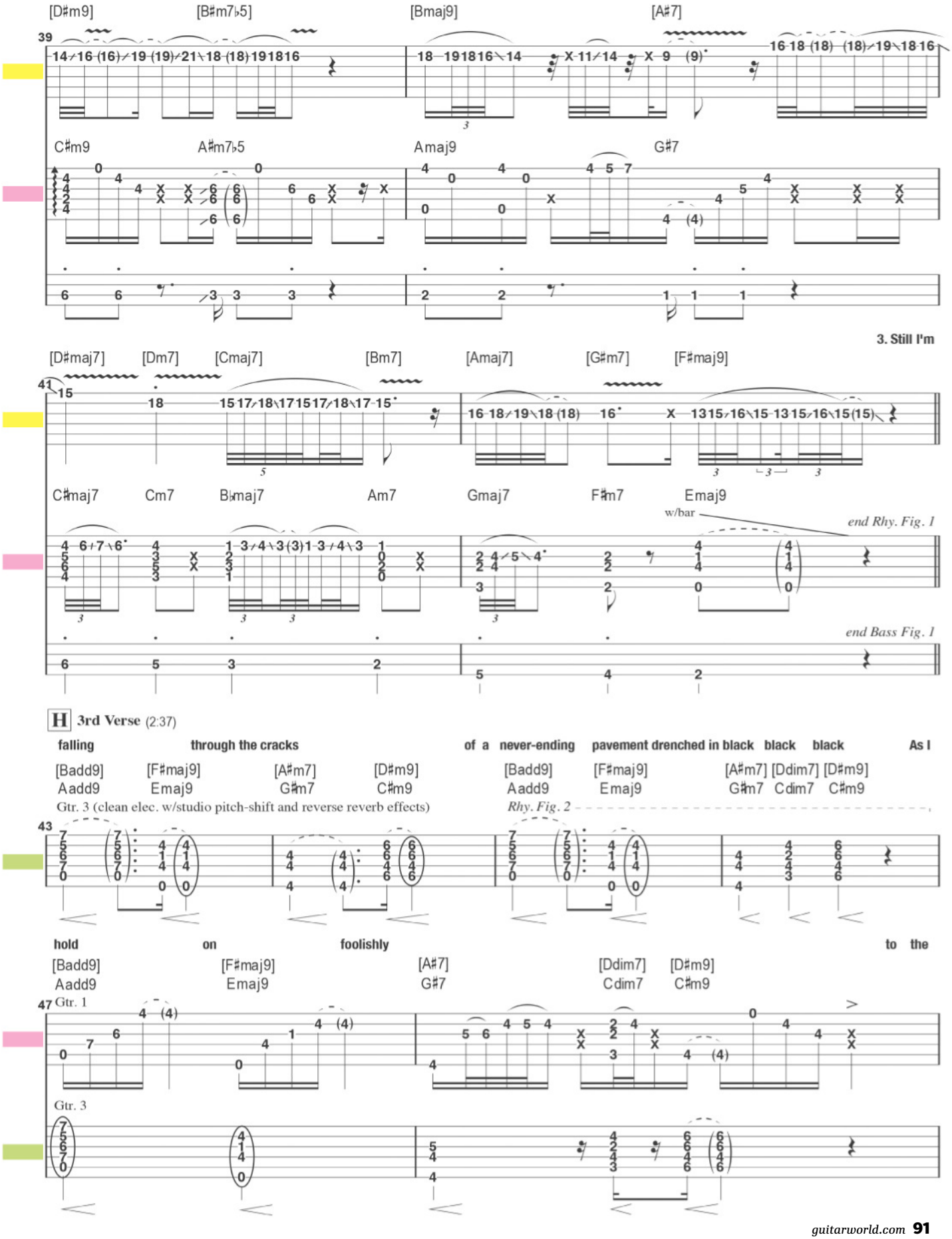
you I'll never mean as much as you mean to me

Amaj9 Emaj9 G♯m7 Cdim7 C♯m9

31

[Bmaj9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]


F (2:05)
G 2nd Guitar Solo (2:08)
[A♯m] [Am] [G♯m] [F♯maj9] [Bmaj9] [A♯7]
33
Gtr. 2 (w/light overdrive and sub-octave effect)
G♯m Gm F♯m Emaj9 Amaj9 G♯7
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 1
Bass
Bass Fig. 1
[D♯m9] [Bmaj9] [A♯7]
35
C♯m9 Amaj9 G♯7
*Notes played on recall only.
[D♯maj7] [Dm7] [Cmaj7] [Bm7] [Bmaj9] [A♯7]
37
w/bar
-1/2
-1/2 +1/2
C♯maj7 Cm7 B♭maj7 Am7 Amaj9 G♯7


[D♯m9] [B♯m7♭5] [Bmaj9] [A♯7]
39
C♯m9 A♯m7♭5 Amaj9 G♯7
3. Still I'm
[D♯maj7] [Dm7] [Cmaj7] [Bm7] [Amaj7] [G♯m7] [F♯maj9]
41
C♯maj7 Cm7 B♭maj7 Am7 Gmaj7 F♯m7 Emaj9
w/bar
end Rhy. Fig. 1
end Bass Fig. 1
H 3rd Verse (2:37)
falling through the cracks of a never-ending pavement drenched in black black black As I
[Badd9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [D♯m9] [Badd9] [F♯maj9] [A♯m7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]
Aadd9 Emaj9 G♯m7 C♯m9 Aadd9 Emaj9 G♯m7 Cdim7 C♯m9
Gtr. 3 (clean elec. w/studio pitch-shift and reverse reverb effects)
Rhy. Fig. 2
43
hold on foolishly to the
[Badd9] [F♯maj9] [A♯7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]
Aadd9 Emaj9 G♯7 Cdim7 C♯m9
47 Gtr. 1
Gtr. 3

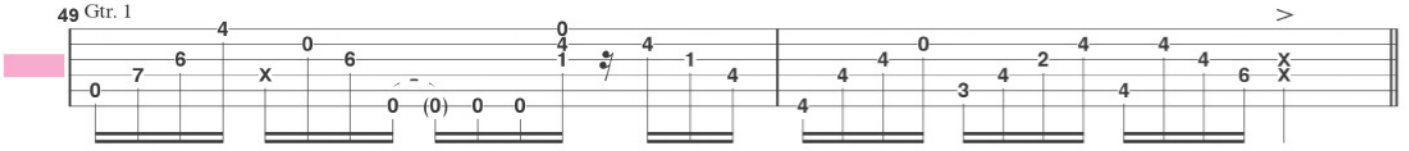
Go back to C Chorus (bar 13)

only thing that means everything to me

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 | [F♯maj9] Emaj9 | [A♯m7] G♯m7 | [Ddim7] Cdim7 | [D♯m9(no3)] C♯m9(no3)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 45)

49 Gtr. 1



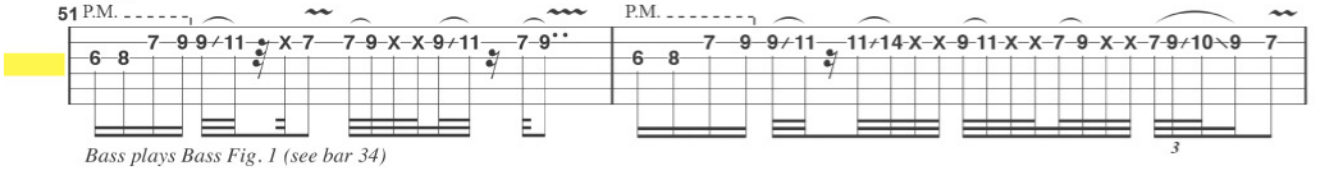
I Outro (3:28)

[Bmaj9] Amaj9 | [A♯7] G♯7 | [D♯m9] C♯m9

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 34)

Gtr. 2

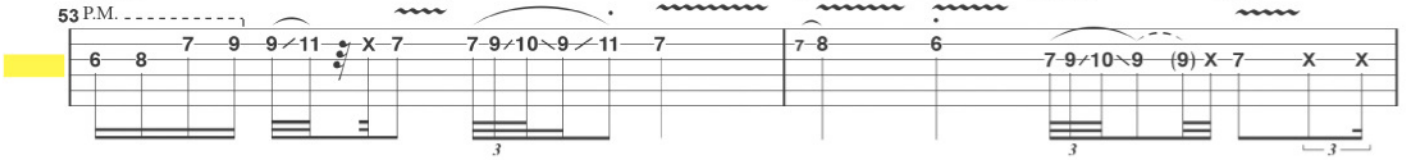
51 P.M.



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 34)

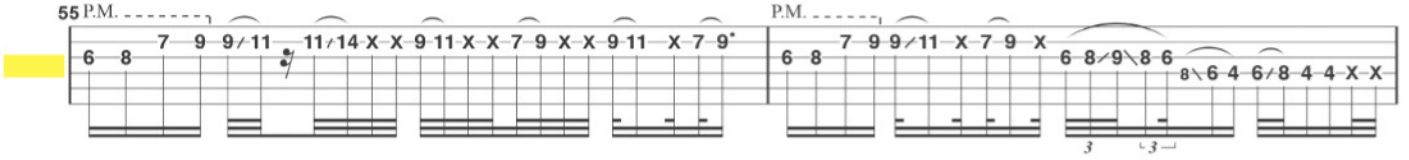
[Bmaj9] Amaj9 | [A♯7] G♯7 | [D♯maj7] C♯maj7 | [Dm7] Cm7 | [Cmaj7] B♭maj7 | [Bm7] Am7

53 P.M.



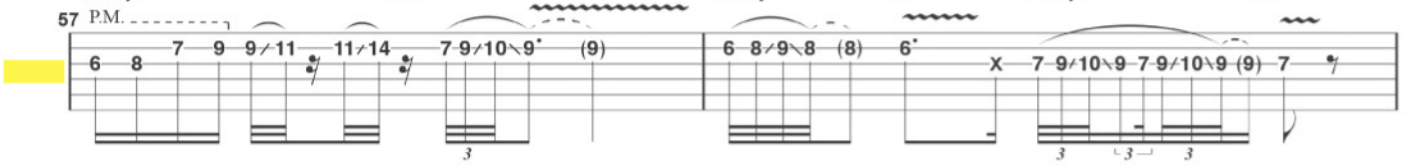
[Bmaj9] Amaj9 | [A♯7] G♯7 | [D♯m9] C♯m9 | [B♯m7] A♯m7

55 P.M.



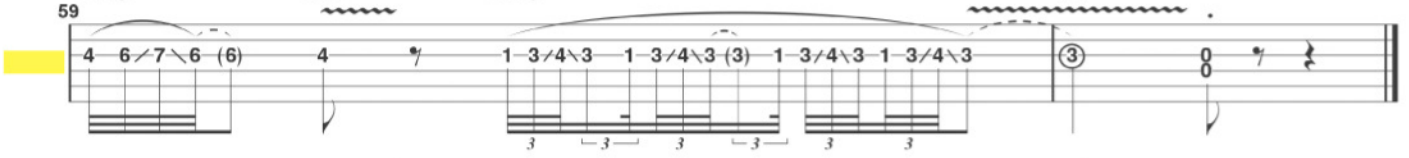
[Bmaj9] Amaj9 | [A♯7] G♯7 | [D♯maj7] C♯maj7 | [Dm7] Cm7 | [Cmaj7] B♭maj7 | [Bm7] Am7

57 P.M.



[Amaj7] Gmaj7 | [G♯m7] F♯m7 | [F♯maj9] Emaj9

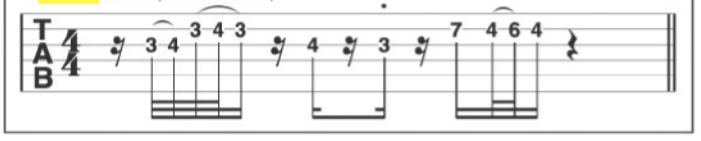
59



Fill 3 (1:33)

[A♯7] [Ddim7] [D♯m9]

Gtr. 2 (w/clean tone)



Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

"IT'S A MOOT POINT"
Melanie Faye

THIS SUBLIMELY SOULFUL r&b song showcases fingerstyle electric guitar sensation Melanie Faye's highly creative and inventive approaches to composition and technique, as well as her musical depth and tasteful note choices for voicing chords and playing melodies.

The guitarist crafted most of the song's parts by spinning colorful variations on the four-chord progression introduced in bars 1 and 2. No doubt inspired in part by Jimi Hendrix's elegantly melodic rhythm playing and Stevie Wonder's sparse but harmonically rich keyboard chord voicing approach, she mostly eschews the redundant octave doubling of standard barre chords. Instead, Melanie favors economical and sometimes angular interval stacks that highlight the chord's essential root and major or minor 3rd, along with upper-structure chord tones, such as the 7th and 9th, while mostly avoiding the 5th, which is superfluous in this jazz-informed style.

Faye arpeggiates most of the song's chords, using her thumb and fingers to pick the strings. On beats 2 and 4 of most of the bars, she'll apply a funk-bass-like thumb slap to her 4th string, muted by the fret hand (indicated by an X). This produces a pitchless, percussive accent on these backbeats, where a drummer would typically hit the snare. When soloing, the guitarist will sometimes join her pick-hand thumb and index finger together, as if holding an invisible pick, and use the nail of her index finger to brush the string downward or upward. The quick 16th-note triplets in bar 38 are articulated this way.

As the song's repeating chord progression is in the concert key of F♯ major/D♯ minor (note the use of a capo in the Gtr. 1 part), Melanie bases most of her solo lines, which she overdubbed without a capo (see the Gtr. 2 part) on the associated relative major and minor pentatonic scales. Notice how the guitarist makes expressive use of vibrato, bends, hammer-ons, pull-offs and especially finger slides, often venturing up and down a single string to create slippery, sitar-like melodies that bring to mind Derek Trucks' exciting slide playing.

"IN BLOOM"
Nirvana

ALTERNATIVE/PUNK ROCK legend Kurt Cobain had quite the knack for coming up with fairly simple yet musically compelling and huge-sounding guitar riffs that perfectly matched and supported his captivating vocals and sardonic lyrics. This classic track from Nirvana's landmark second album, *Nevermind*, features the electric singer-songwriter's signature use of shifting power chords and barre chords and pronounced emphasis on dynamics, or contrasts in volume and texture, varying his tone throughout the arrangement, from heavily distorted (intro and chorus sections) to clean with a chorusing effect (last four bars of each verse), to both (guitar solo), to nothing, completely laying out for the first half of each verse.

Joined by bassist Krist Novoselic and drummer Dave Grohl, Cobain comes crashing in on the downbeat of bar 1 with a progression of accented root-5th-octave power chords on the bottom three strings, which he peppers with fleeting, almost unnoticed open-string strums (the open A, D and G strings). These "all-purpose passing chords" add a splash of chromatic color and dissonance to the proceedings while also conveniently giving the guitarist's fret hand ample time to move from chord to chord. In bar 4, the band introduces the song's verse riff, for which Cobain employs a different set of chord shapes, again liberally using his open strings as "fill." Notice the difference in timbre between the two different B♭5 chord grips used in bars 1 and 4, even though the notes are the same.

As if channeling the spirits of Jimi Hendrix, Albert King and/or Stevie Ray Vaughan, Cobain launches his psychedelic guitar solo (Section E) with a series of wailing, angst-fueled double-stop bends on the top two strings, for which he allows his bending finger on the high E string (most likely the ring finger, supported one fret below by the middle) to "snag" the B string and take it along for a gnarly, dissonant ride. Interestingly, the guitarist kind of does the opposite thing in bar 30, where he pulls the B string downward after releasing a push bend on the G string.

"MY SHARONA"
The Knack

A POWER-POP masterpiece, this smash hit from 1979 features a super catchy drum beat and perfectly matching bass riff, playful vocals and an inspired, extended guitar solo that takes the song in a completely different and unexpectedly ambitious direction and builds it to an exciting climax.

Combining the distinctive timbres of their Fender Stratocaster and Gibson Les Paul, guitarists Doug Feiger and Berton Averre tightly double the song's punchy single-note G octaves riff. Notice the black dots over the quarter-note rhythms in bars 9-11. These indicate that the G notes are played staccato, as if they were eighth notes, separated by rests. This is done by simply loosening your fretting finger's grip on the string immediately after picking it.

The song's first guitar solo (see section D) serves as more of an ensemble interlude, featuring chains of punchy, syncopated chord accents interspersed with reprises of the G octaves riff, over which Averre serves up sassy improvised two-bar licks based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B, C, D, F).

This brief musical detour is followed by a third and final verse and chorus, which could have very well wrapped up the song in a short, sweet package. But instead, the band then takes us on a "Free Bird"-like outro jam where Averre cuts loose and showcases his tasteful soloing chops and improvisational prowess.

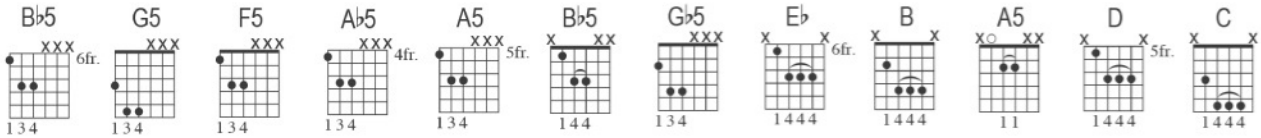
Notice how the guitarist begins his solo (at section H) by initially acknowledging the underlying C - G - F - G chord progression, which he does by touching upon the triadic chord tones in bars 62-65. He then launches into a string of long, rhythmically dense phrases and tension-building repetition licks that are based on the C major pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, A), liberally employing whole-step bends and pull-offs while gradually working his way up the fretboard to a climactic high C note in bar 92. Averre bends up to this note from a whole step below (B♭, at the 18th fret) and adds shimmering vibrato to it by repeatedly releasing the bend slightly — by about a quarter step — and re-bending it back up to C.

"IN BLOOM"

Nirvana

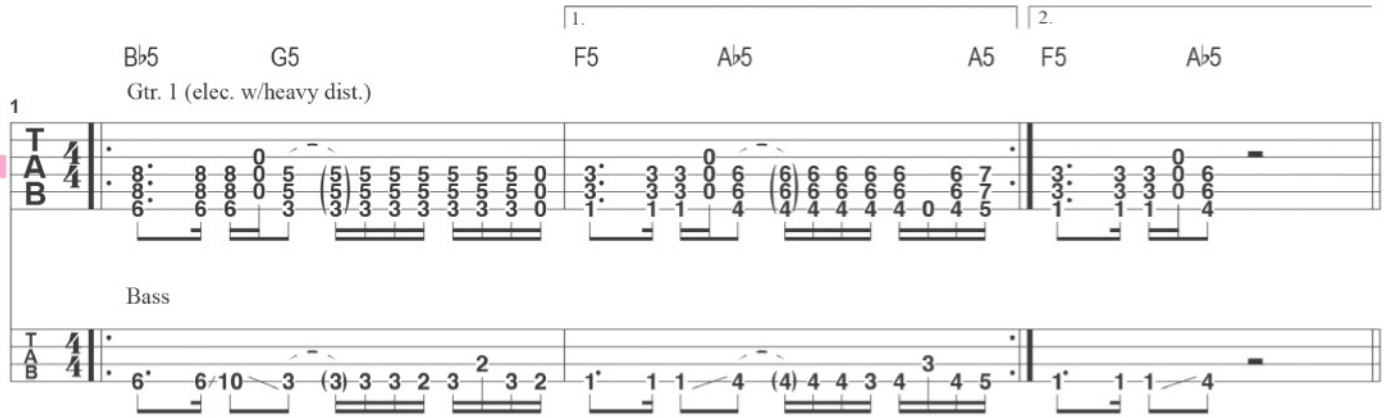
As heard on **NEVERMIND**

Words and Music by **KURT COBAIN** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

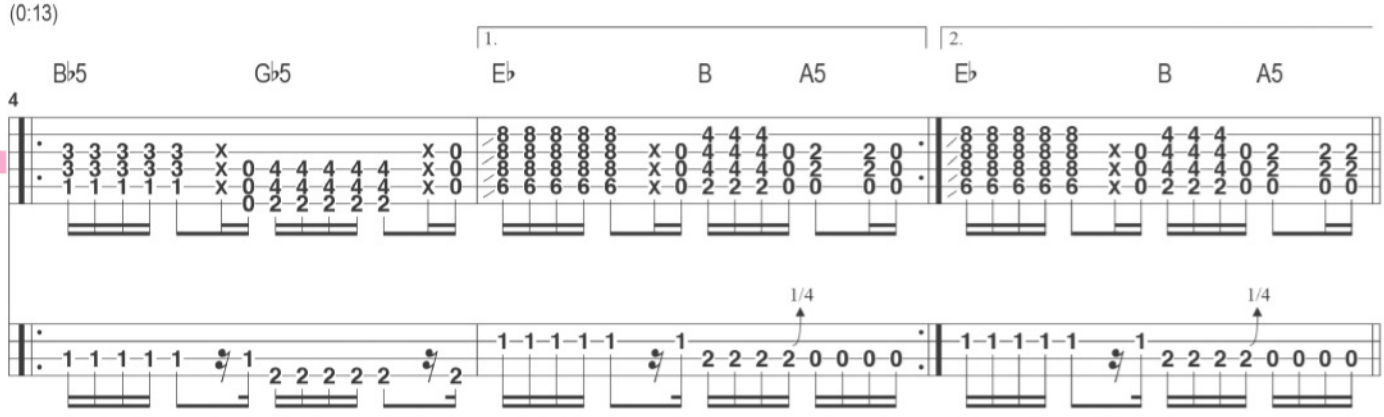


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Slow ♩ = 78



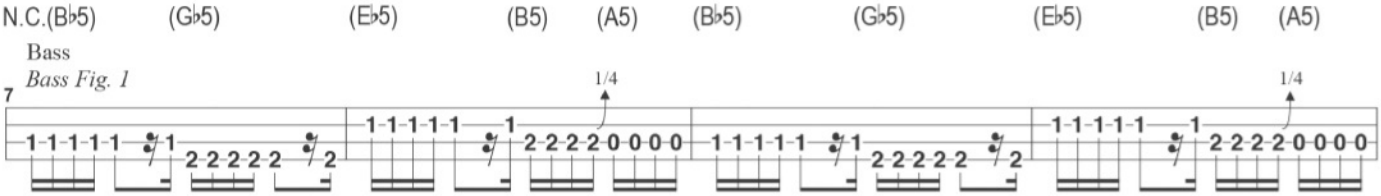
(0:13)



B **Verses** (0:25, 1:39)

1. Sell the kids for food
2. We can have some more

Weather changes moods
Nature is a whore



"IN BLOOM"
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1. 2.

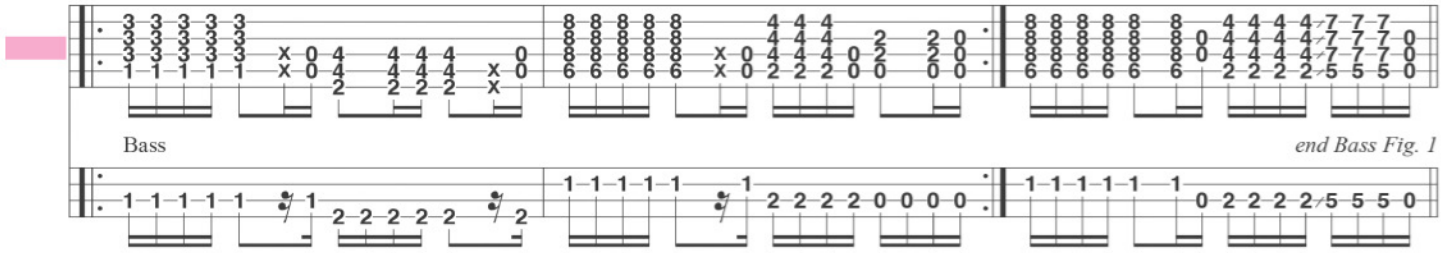
(1.) Spring is here again
Reproductive glands And

(2.) Bruises on the fruit
Tender age in bloom And

B♭ G♭5 E♭ B A5 E♭ B D

Gtr. 1 (w/chorus and light overdrive) w/dist.

11



Bass *end Bass Fig. 1*

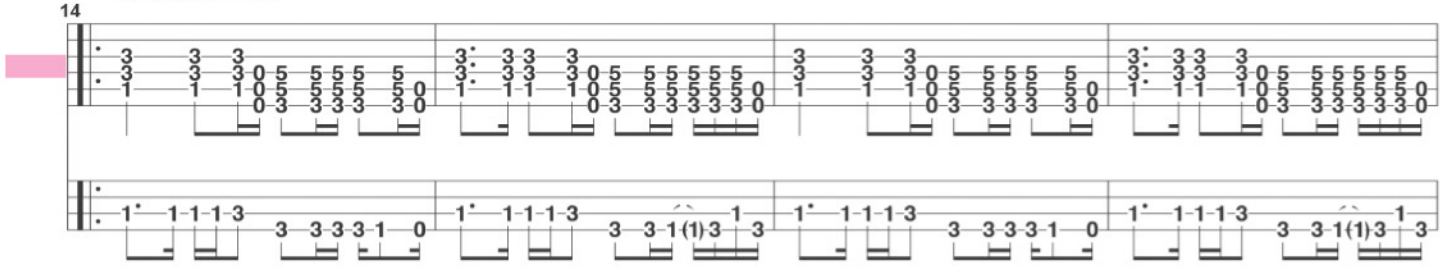
C **Chorus** (0:50, 2:03, 3:17)

he's the one who likes all our pretty songs And he likes to sing along And he likes toshoot his gun But he

B♭5 G5 B♭5 G5 B♭5 G5 B♭5 G5

w/dist., chorus off

14



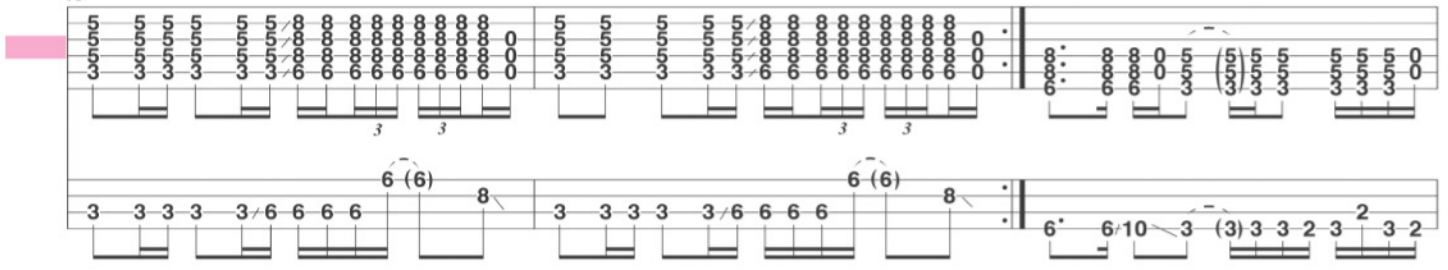
D **Intro Reprise** (1:26, 2:40)

2nd time on 3rd chorus, skip ahead to **F** *(bar 32)*

don't know what it means don't know what it means And I say yeah

C E♭ C E♭ B♭5 G5

18

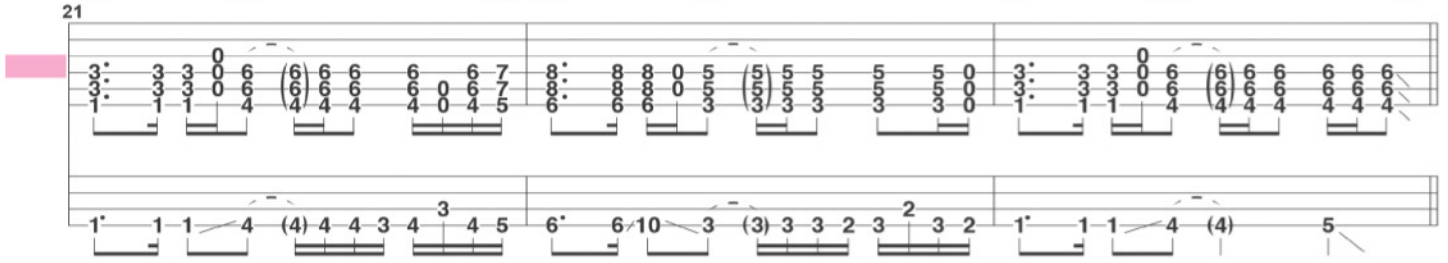


1st time, go back to **B** *2nd verse (bar 7)*

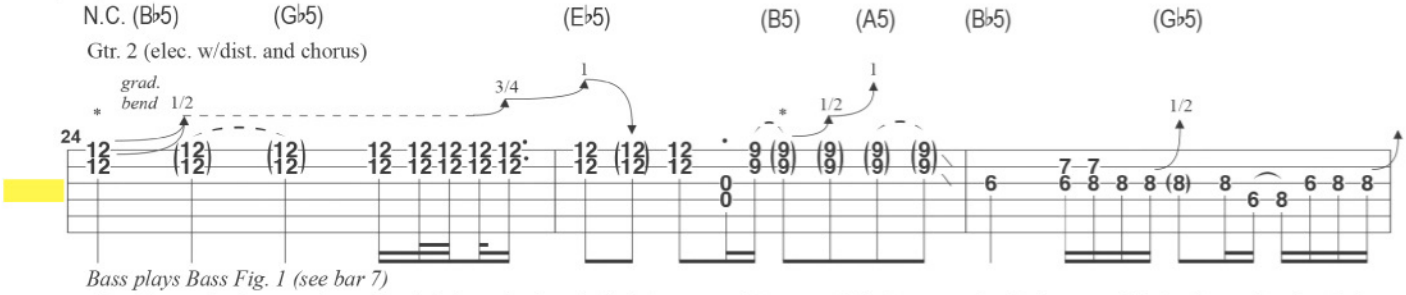
Ooh

F5 A♭5 A5 B♭5 G5 F5 A♭5 A5

21

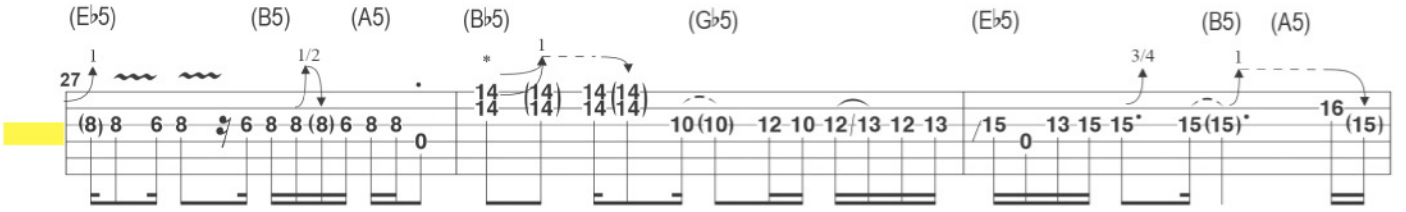


E Guitar Solo (2:52)

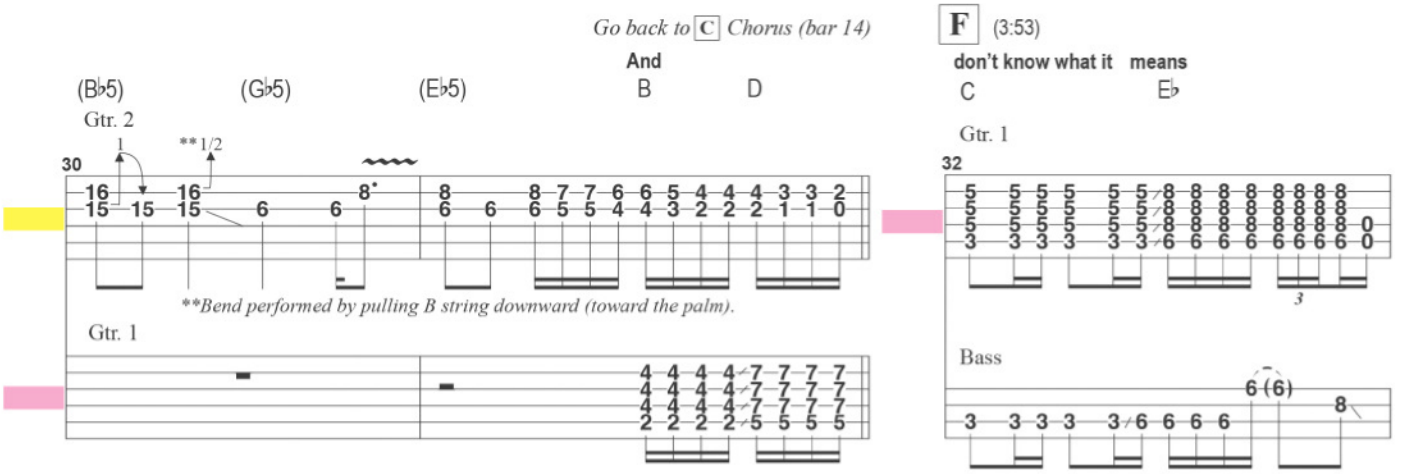


Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)

**Double-stop bends are performed by slightly pre-bending the high E string and "snagging" the B string under the fingertip while bending and picking both strings together. The B-string bend intervals are slightly less than those indicated for the high E string.*

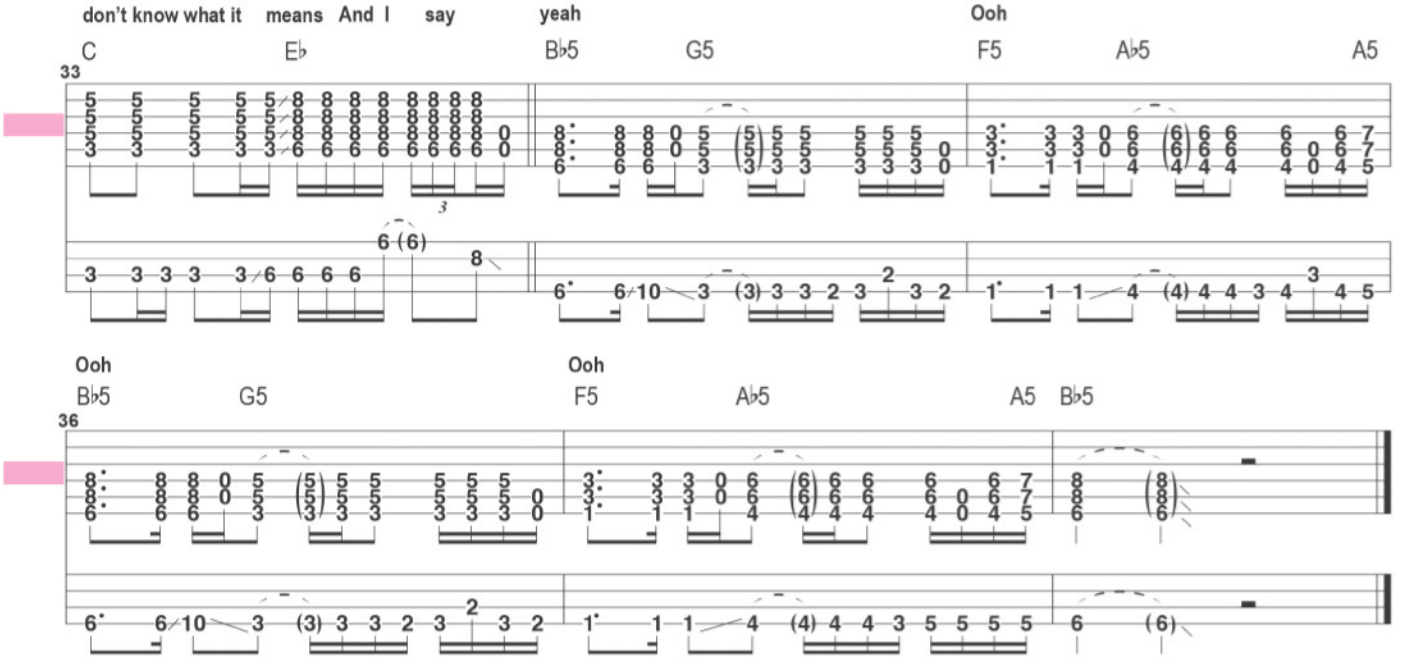


Go back to C *Chorus (bar 14)*



F (3:53)

G Outro (3:59)



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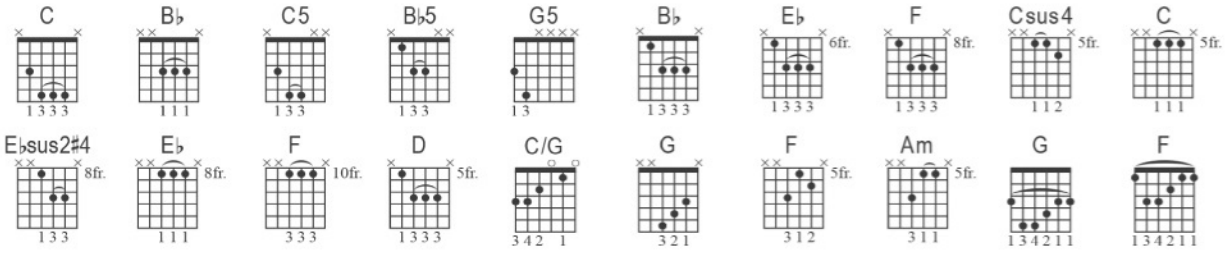
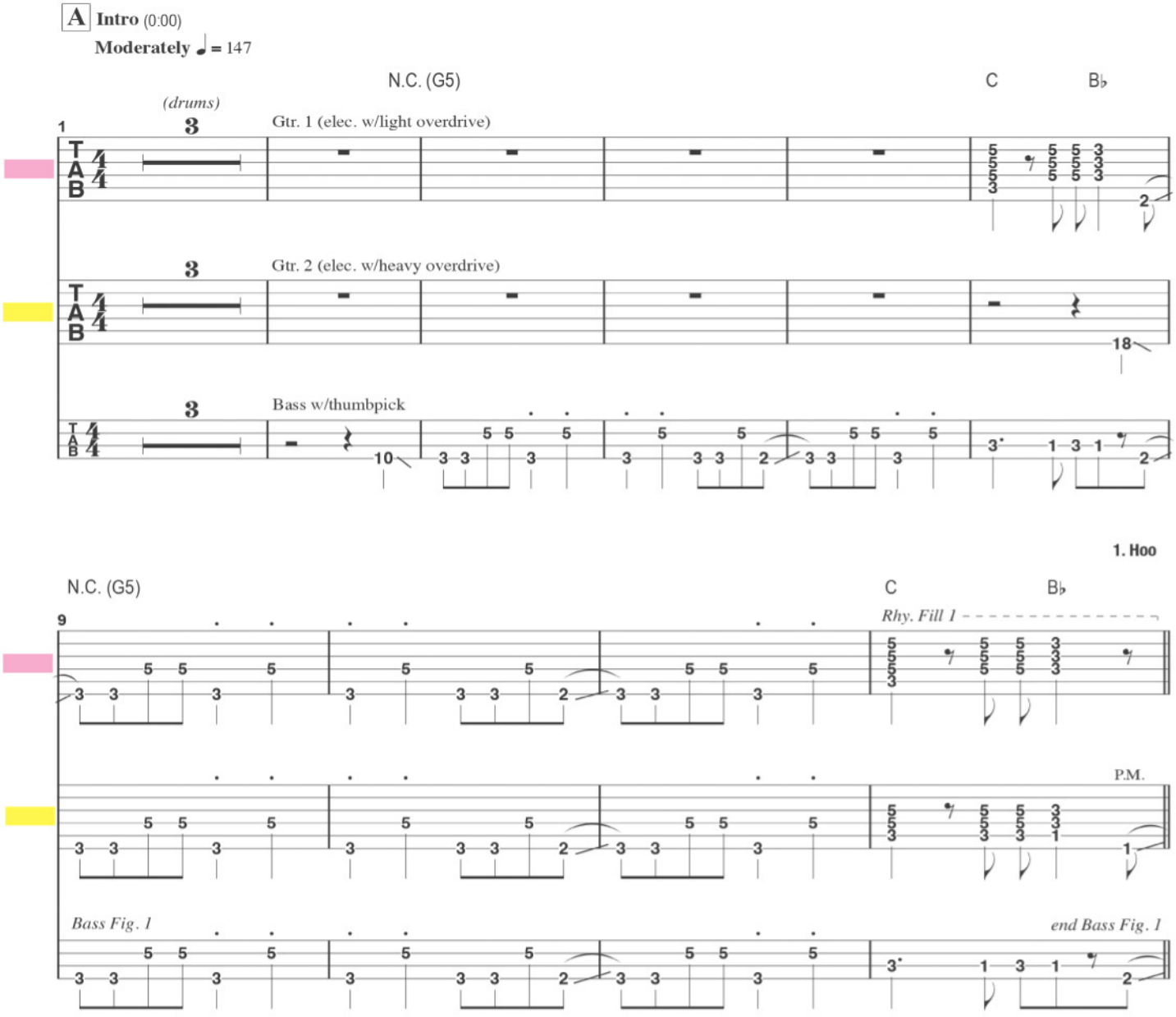
"MY SHARONA"

The Knack

As heard on **GET THE KNACK**

Words and Music by DOUG FIEGER *and* BERTON AVERRE • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN





"MY SHARONA"
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B **Verses** (0:19, 0:49, 1:57)

(1.) my little pretty one a - pretty one When you gonna give me some time Sharona Hoo
(2.) a little closer huh a - will you huh Close enough to look in my eyes Sharona Keepin'
(3.) you gonna give to me g - give to me Is it just a matter of time Sharona Is

Gtr. 2
P.M.
C5 B♭5
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see bar 12)

13

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)

you make my motor run my motor run Gun it comin' off of the line Sharona
it a mystery it gets to me Runnin' down the length of my thigh Sharona Never
it d - d - destiny d - destiny Or is it just a game in my mind Sharona

N.C.(G5) C5 B♭5
P.M.
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see bar 12)

17

Substitute Bass Fill 2 third time (see below bar 53)

C **Chorus** (0:33, 1:02, 2:10)

gonna stop give it up such a dirty mind I always give it up for the touch of the younger kind

G5 B♭
Gtr. 1
let ring

21

Gtr. 2
P.M.

Bass

3rd time, skip ahead to **F** *(bar 53)*

My my my aye aye Woo! *1st and 2nd times:* M - m - m my Sharona
3rd time: M - m - m - m - m - m - m

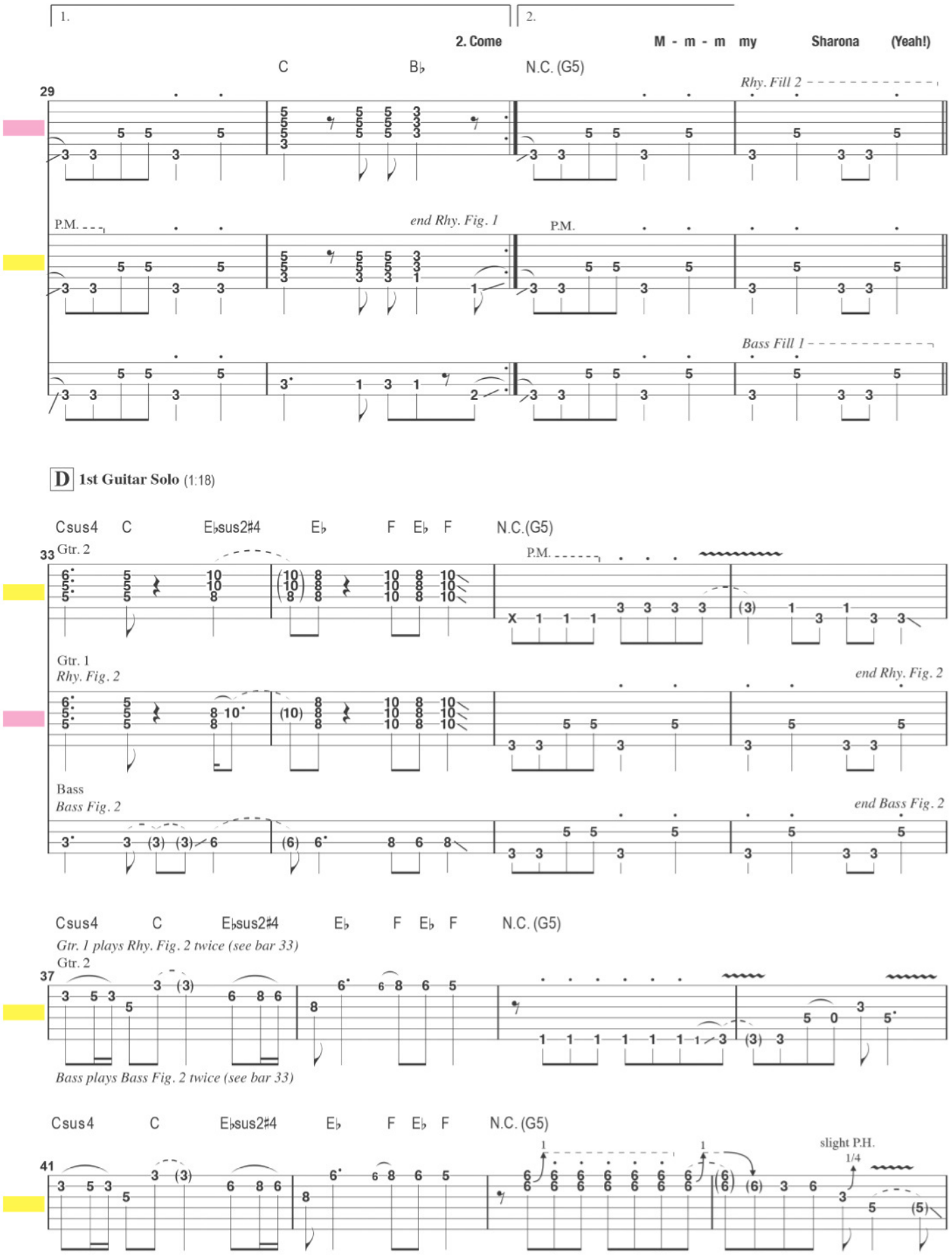
C E♭ F N.C.(G5)
Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 2 third time (see bar 32)

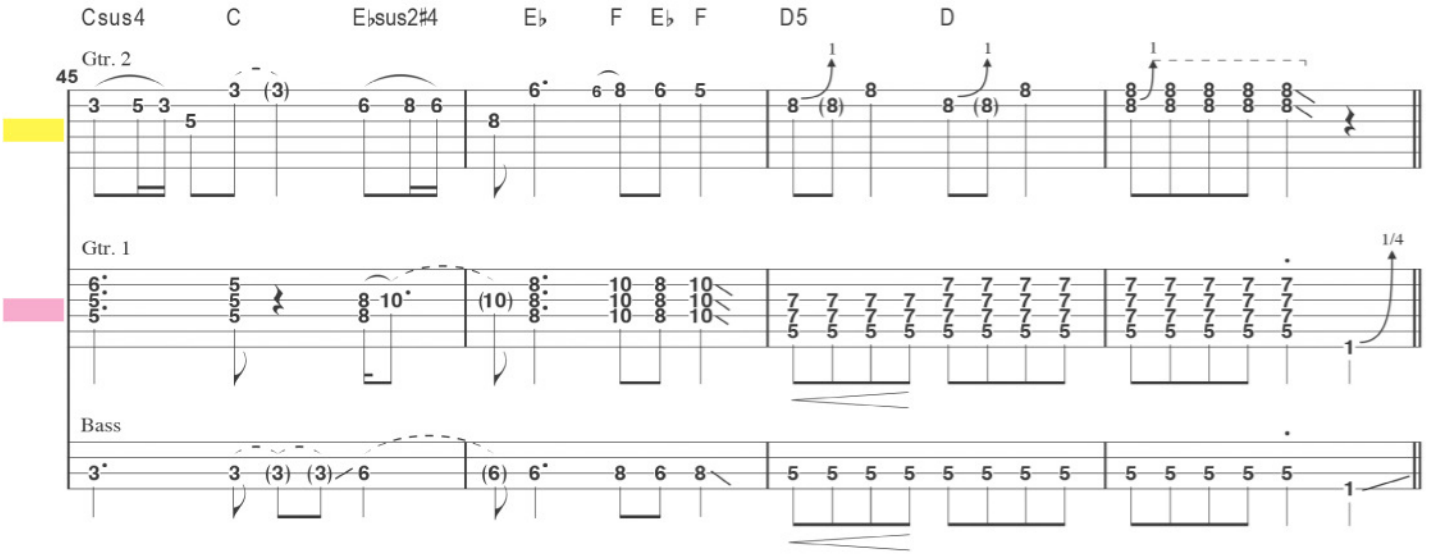
25

Rhy. Fig. 1
P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Substitute Bass Fill 1 third time (see bar 32)

*Substitute note in parentheses 2nd and 3rd times.

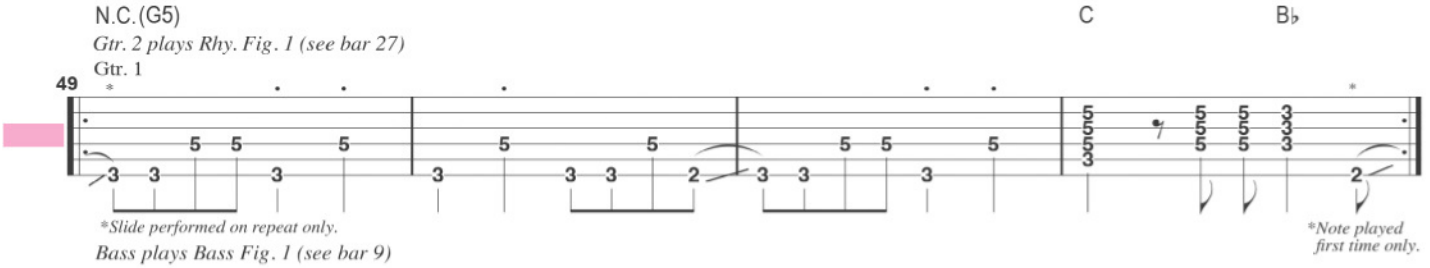

1.
2.
2. Come
M - m - m my
Sharona
(Yeah!)
C
B♭
N.C. (G5)
29
Rhy. Fill 2
P.M.
end Rhy. Fig. 1
P.M.
Bass Fill 1
D 1st Guitar Solo (1:18)
Csus4
C
E♭sus2♯4
E♭
F
E♭
F
N.C.(G5)
33
Gtr. 2
P.M.
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 2
Bass
Bass Fig. 2
end Bass Fig. 2
Csus4
C
E♭sus2♯4
E♭
F
E♭
F
N.C. (G5)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 33)
37
Gtr. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see bar 33)
Csus4
C
E♭sus2♯4
E♭
F
E♭
F
N.C. (G5)
41
slight P.H.
1/4



E (1:44)

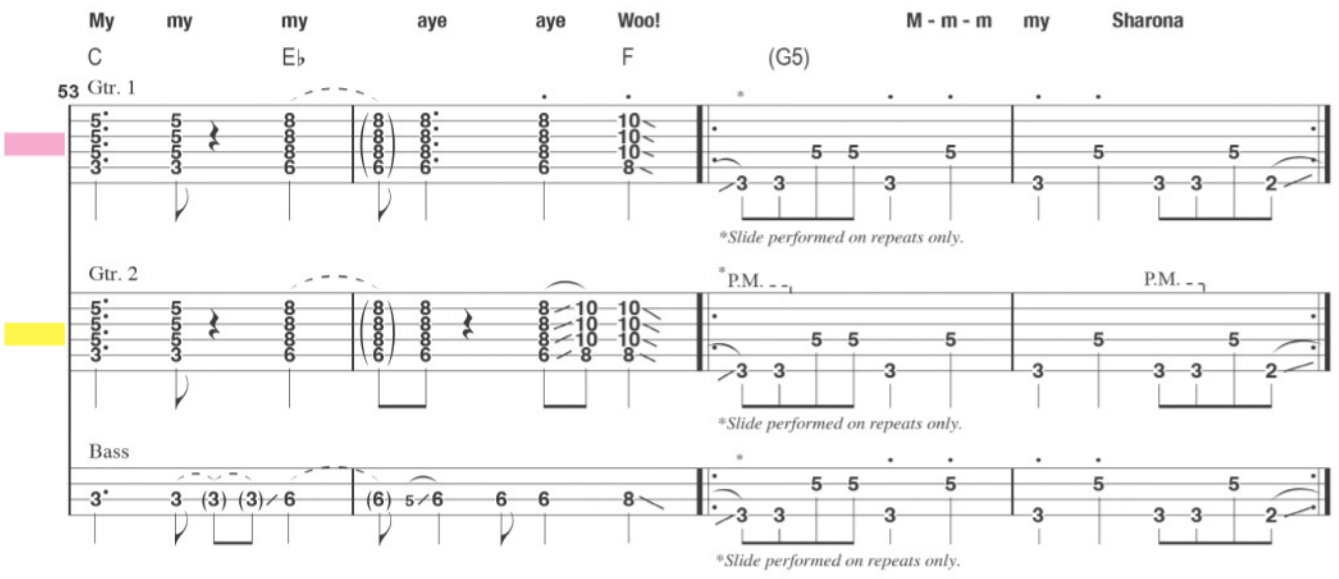
Go back to **B** *3rd Verse (bar 13)*

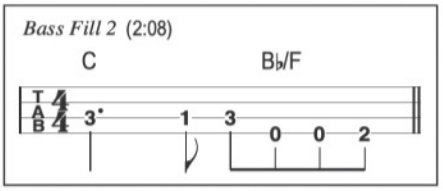
(2nd time) **3. When**

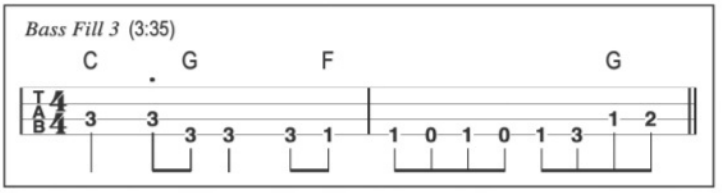


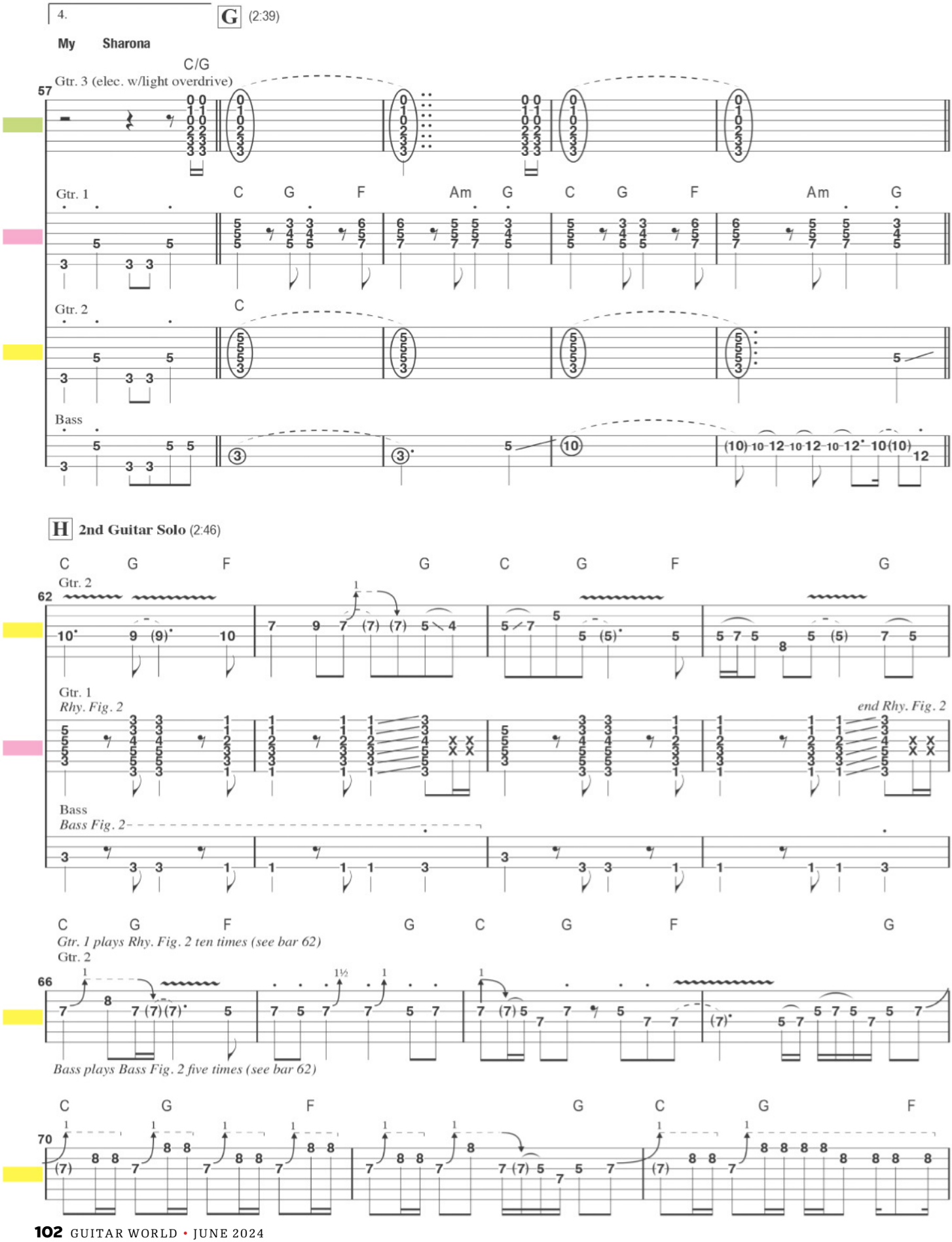
F (2:23)

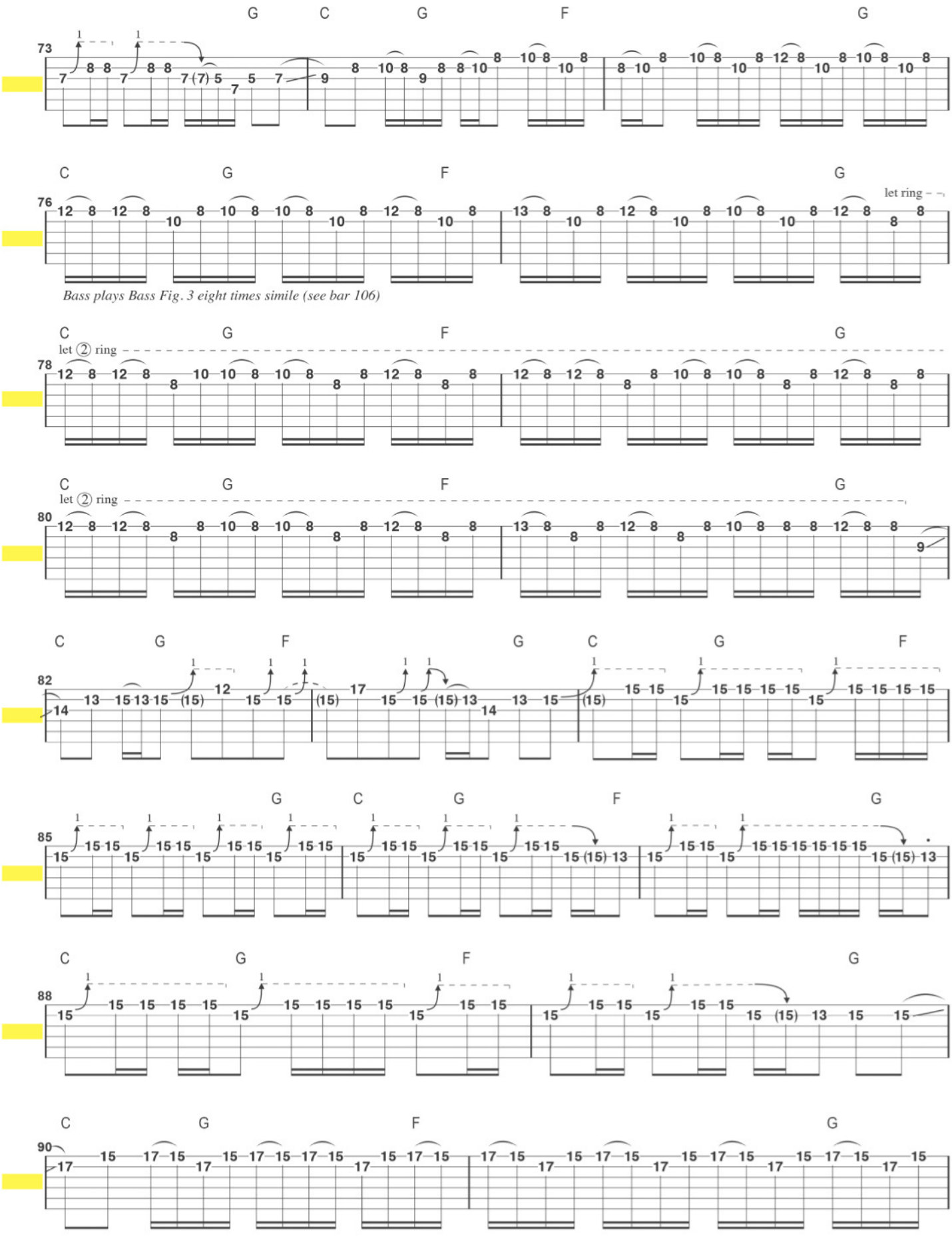
1., 2., 3.

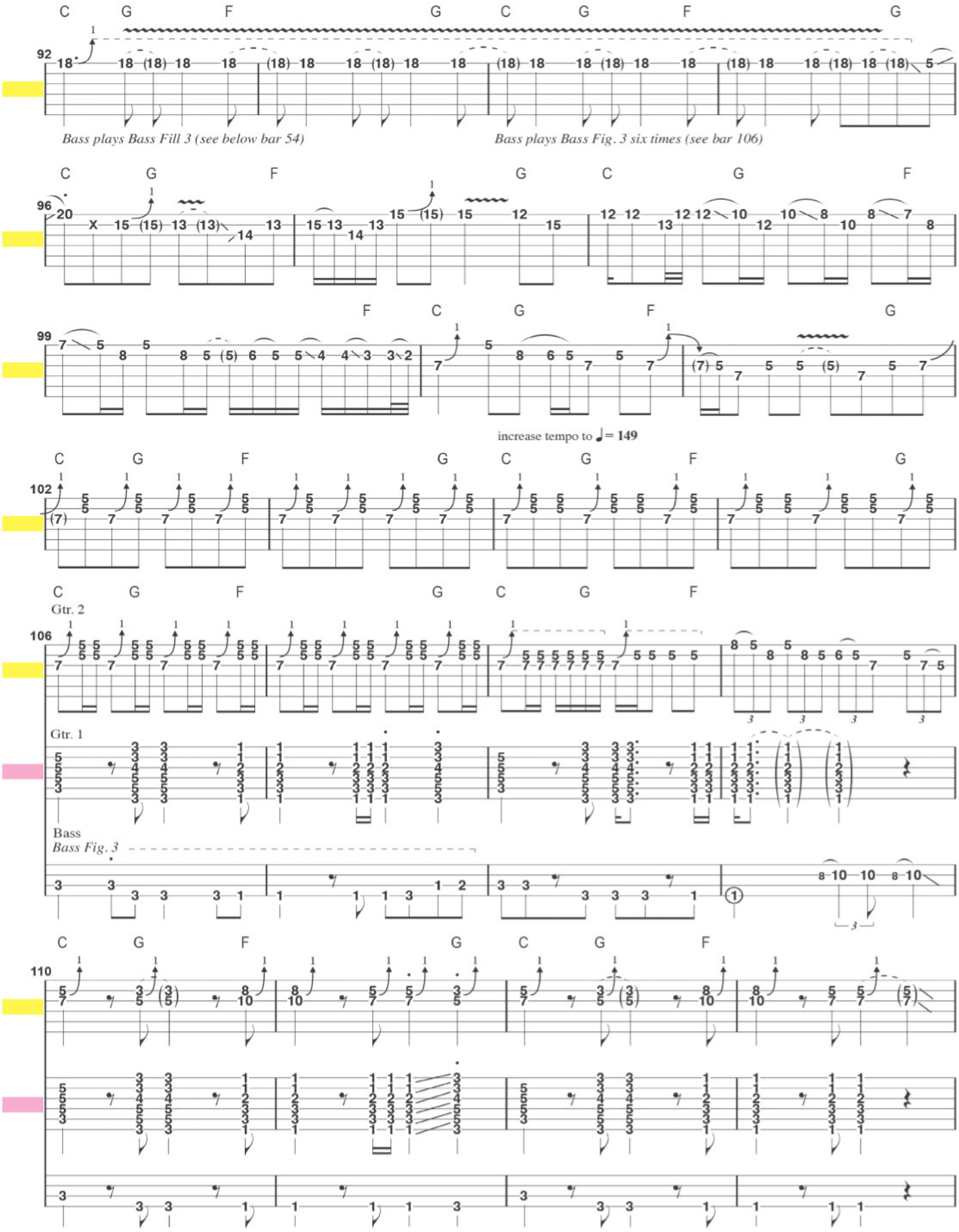


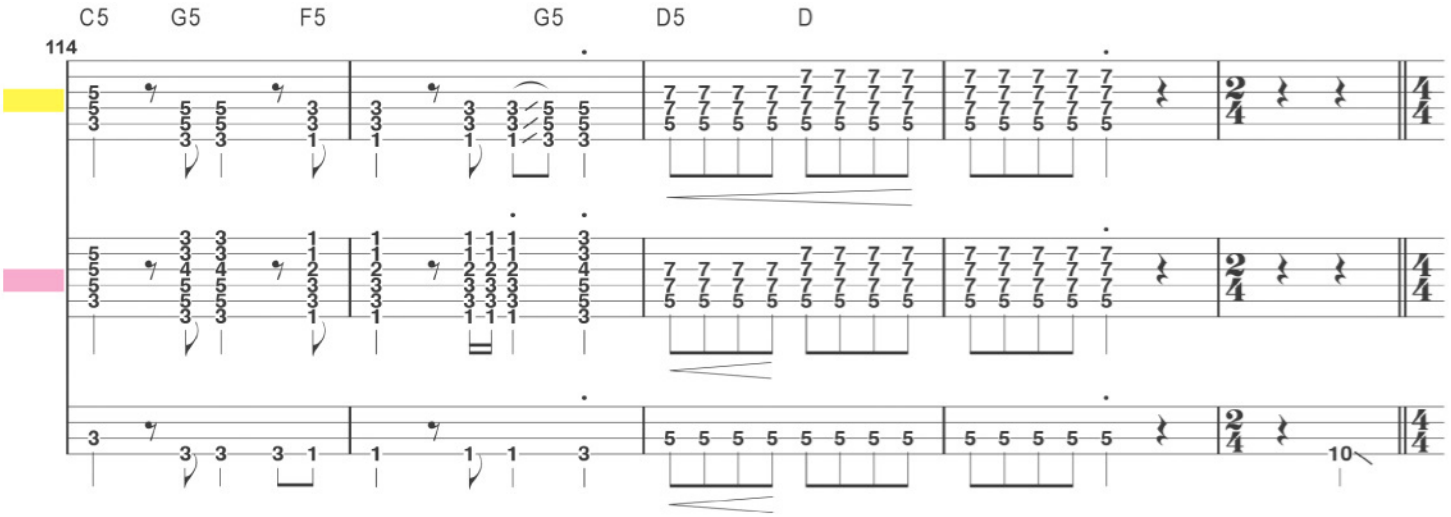





4.
G (2:39)
My Sharona
C/G
Gtr. 3 (elec. w/light overdrive)
57
Gtr. 1
C G F Am G C G F Am G
Gtr. 2
C
Bass
H 2nd Guitar Solo (2:46)
C G F G C G F G
Gtr. 2
62
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 2
Bass
Bass Fig. 2
C G F G C G F G
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 ten times (see bar 62)
Gtr. 2
66
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 five times (see bar 62)
C G F G C G F
70

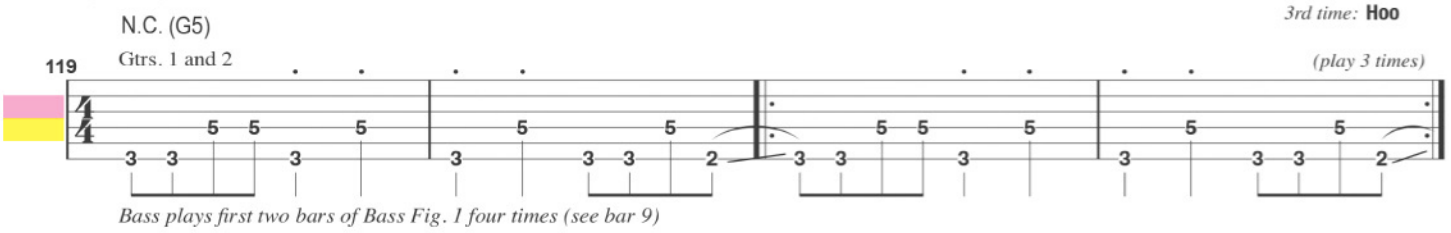

G C G F G
73
C G F G
let ring
76
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 eight times simile (see bar 106)
C G F G
let ② ring
78
C G F G
let ② ring
80
C G F G C G F
82
G C G F G
85
C G F G
88
C G F G
90


C G F G C G F G
92
Bass plays Bass Fill 3 (see below bar 54)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 six times (see bar 106)
C G F G C G F
96
F C G F G
99
increase tempo to ♩= 149
C G F G C G F G
102
C G F G C G F
Gtr. 2
106
Gtr. 1
Bass
Bass Fig. 3
C G F G C G F
110

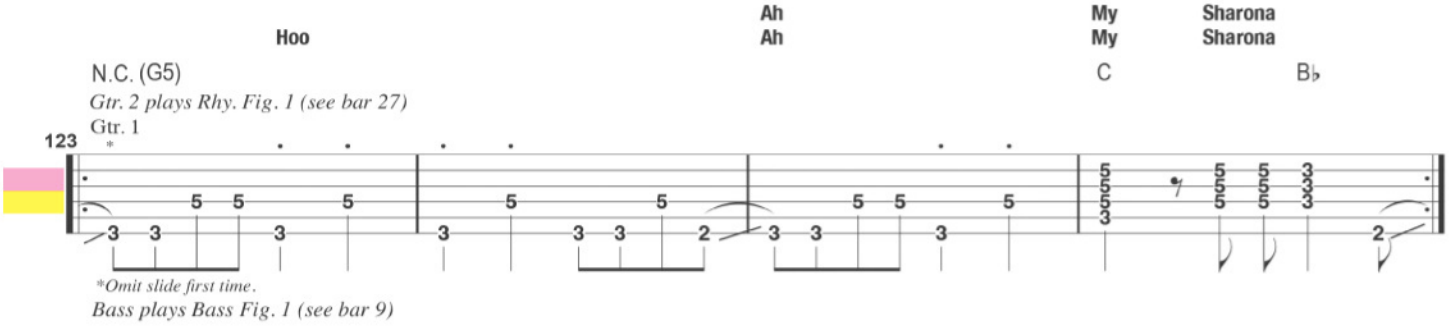


I Outro (4:17)

(♩ = 148)

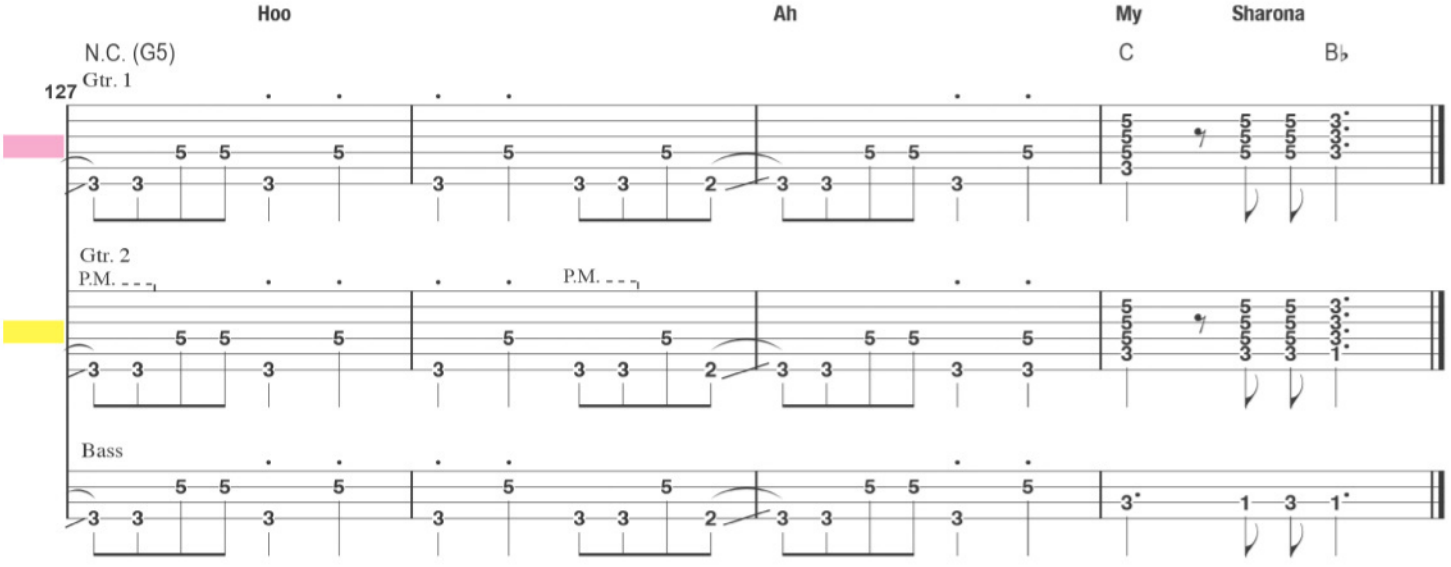


Bass plays first two bars of Bass Fig. 1 four times (see bar 9)



**Omit slide first time.*

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)



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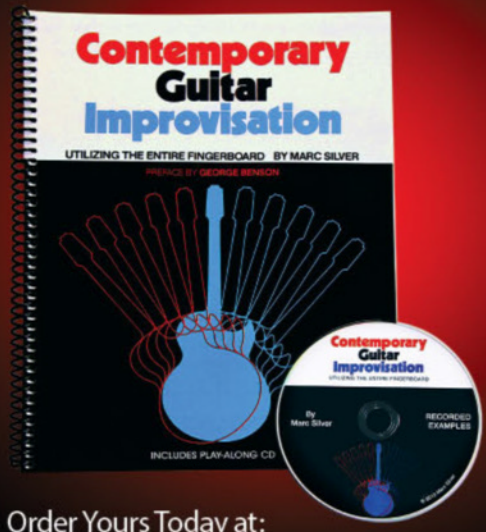

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BY CHRIS GILL

1982-85, 1993-PRESENT IBANEZ TS9 TUBE SCREAMER

CATEGORY: OVERDRIVE PEDAL

THE IBANEZ TUBE Screamer is one of the most popular stomp boxes of all time, used by dozens of famous guitarists on hundreds of well-known tracks — but the main reason for its perennial success is overwhelmingly due to its association with Stevie Ray Vaughan.

If you've looked around for info on the Tube Screamer model that Vaughan used, you'll likely see the first iteration TS808 lauded as the *ne plus ultra* version for authentic SRV tone. This is usually repeated ad infinitum by writers who haven't done thorough research or, even worse, by pedal designers and vintage guitar dealers who are likely more concerned about profit than truth or historical accuracy. While it is indeed true that Vaughan once used a TS808, it was only for a very brief period from late 1981 through early 1982, and he never used an 808 on any of his officially released recordings.

Vaughan's actual Tube Screamer of choice was the circa 1982-85 TS9 model. Vaughan consistently used a TS9 on stage and in the studio from mid-1982 through mid-1988 on the bulk of his peak career output. The only exceptions are the *In Step* and *Family Style* albums and the studio version of "Boot Hill" on *The Sky Is Crying* where he used the TS10 Tube Screamers that replaced the TS9s in his rig. Vaughan's use of the TS9 is exceptionally well documented in live photos and videos from 1982 onwards and numerous inventory, insurance and customs declaration documents.

If you've dug into Tube Screamer lore, you've probably noticed obsessive ruminations about certain op amp chips like the JRC-4558. Here's another truth — Vaughan wasn't fussy about this kind of minutiae, so you really shouldn't be either. Many amateur pedal builders who have experimented with swapping op amps admit that they can hear only subtle differences between various op amps, if any. Usually the most notable contrasts in tone and character emerge when the gain (drive control) is almost fully boosted, which isn't a setting that SRV used on his TS9s anyway.

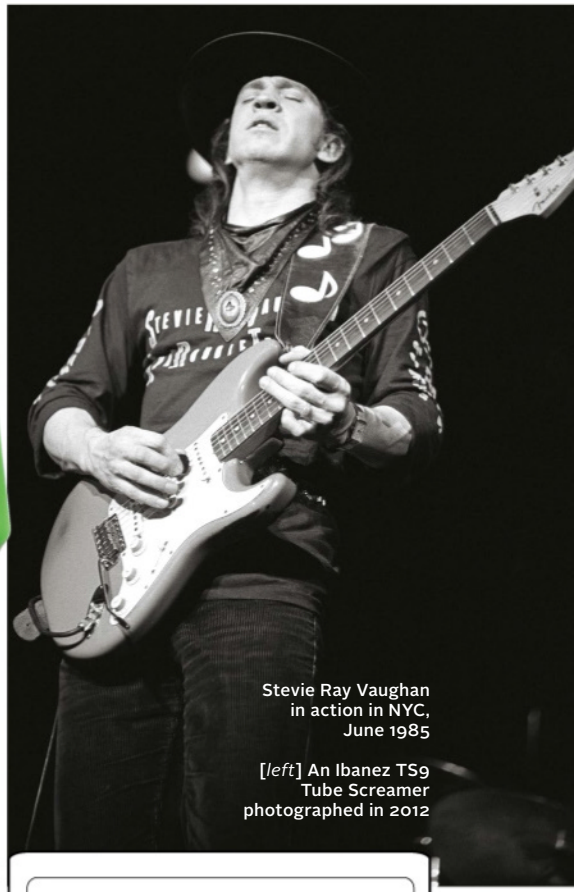
Rather, Vaughan dialed his TS9 with the Level knob nearly or all the way up and with the Drive knob nearly or all the way down for a "clean" boost setting. He also liked the pedal's distinctive lower midrange emphasis. "I use the Tube Screamer because of the tone knob," he told Frank Joseph in the September 1983 issue of *Guitar World*. "You can turn it on slightly to get a Guitar Slim tone, which is how I use it."

Vaughan particularly liked how the Tube Screamer enhanced the vocal character of his Vox V846 wah, so when you hear him using a wah, you can be sure the Tube Screamer is on too

It should be noted that Vaughan engaged his Tube Screamers very sparingly. For example, on his debut *Texas Flood* album, he used it only for his gritty solos on the title track and "Testify," and he didn't use it at all on David Bowie's *Let's Dance*. Vaughan particularly liked how the Tube Screamer enhanced the vocal character of his Vox V846 wah, so anytime you hear Vaughan using a wah you can be sure that the Tube Screamer was on too.

You can spend hundreds or even thousands on an original Eighties Tube Screamer. Numerous pedal builders offer Tube Screamer modifications, and dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of Tube Screamer-derived and -influenced stomp boxes are available from boutique and mainstream companies alike.

However, it's truly hard to beat the TS9 reissue that Ibanez still offers today. It sounds more than good enough, it's affordably priced and it won't break your heart should it get stolen or ruined after some boisterous barfly barfs Bourbon all over it.



Stevie Ray Vaughan in action in NYC, June 1985

[*left*] An Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer photographed in 2012

SUGGESTED SETTING

SRV boost: Drive: 2-3. Tone: 3-5, Level: 9-10

Tip: This setting works well with pretty much any guitar and amp rig, but it sounds especially good with a Strat or Tele with a blackface Fender amp. The TS9's boosted low midrange and slightly rolled off bass gives single-coil pickups extra body, heft and definition that's particularly ideal for solos that cut through the mix.

DAVID CAUDERY/FUTURE (PEDAL) LARRY BUSACCA/WIREIMAGE

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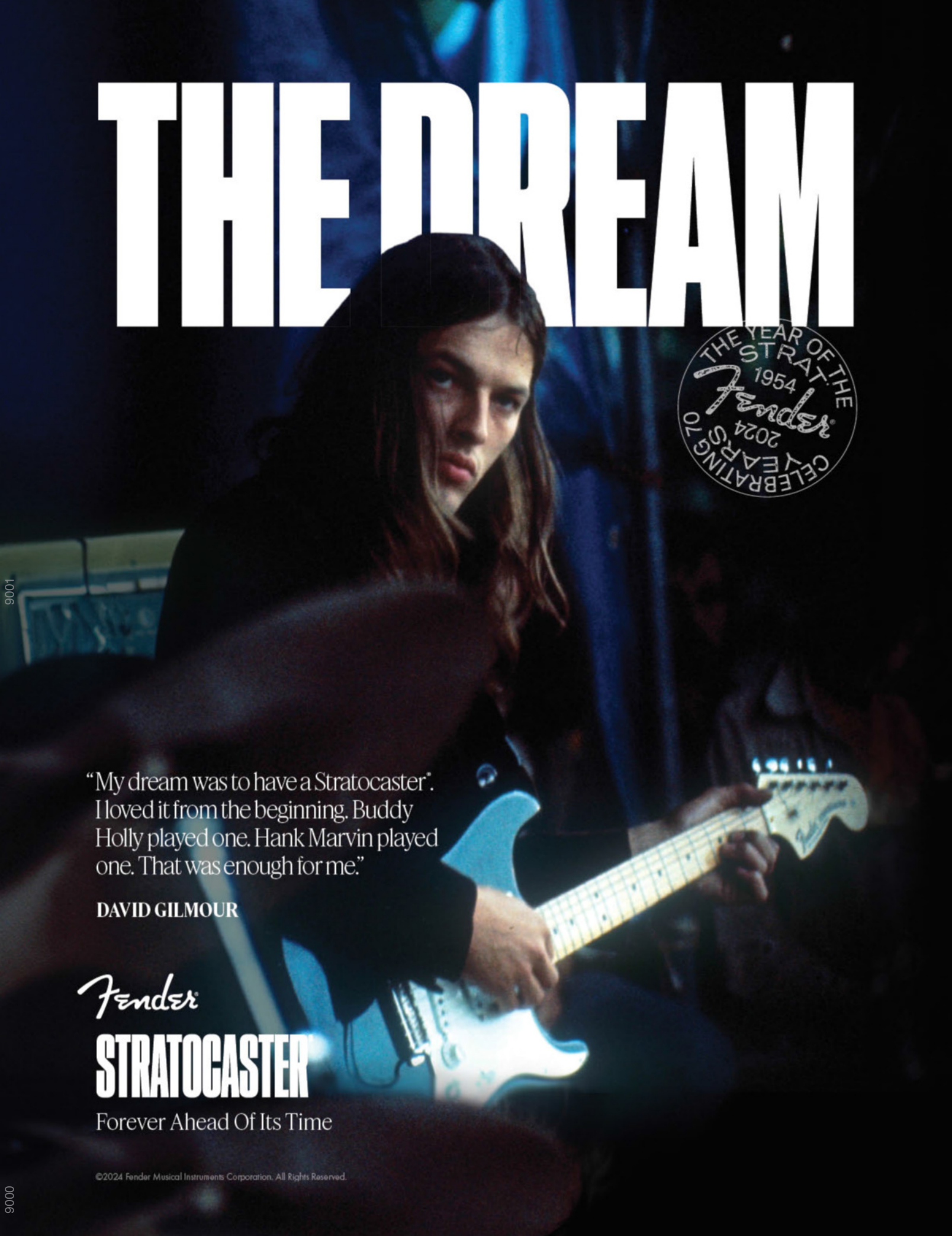
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